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EDITOR'S LETTER

Award-winning architecture creates its own challenge for the garden that surrounds it. It needs to anchor the building in the landscape but still reflect the modernity of the house's design. The garden at Sussex House, designed by Andy Sturgeon, proves that it is possible to do both. A contemporary glass and timber house with strong angular lines is reflected in blocky planting where the bold shapes of *Echinops ritro* 'Veitch's Blue', *Helenium* 'Moorheim Beauty' and *Acanthus mollis* jostle for space, paired with rectangular blocks of short, clipped grass. An expanse of wildflower meadow links it to the South Downs beyond. It's a modern house with a modern garden and a definite sense of location.

In Northamptonshire, designer James Alexander-Sinclair takes a playful approach to place. Amelanchiers, hazels, dogwoods and a small spinney of pretty cherry trees underplanted with wild grass connect the house to the woods close by and loose planting that includes foxgloves, *Libertia chilensis* and *Veronicastrum virginicum* 'Fascination' add movement and height. It's dotted with sharply cut topiary that repeats as a series of box spheres tumbling down the garden's sloping site.

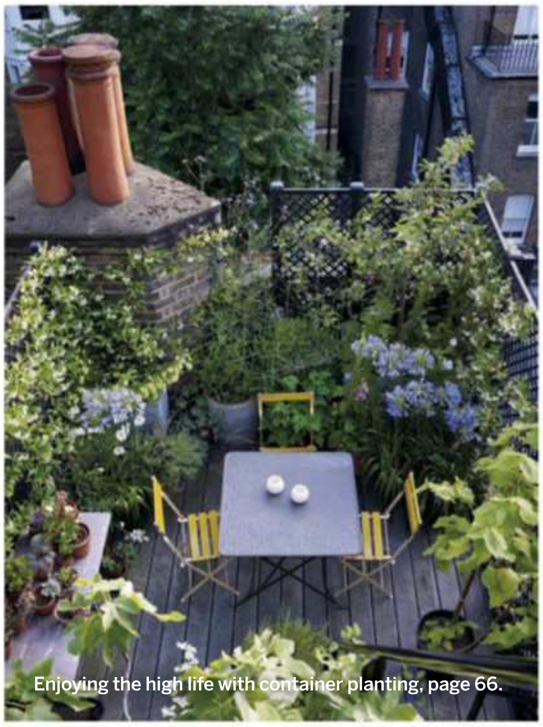
The Dorset parsonage at Littlebredy gardened by florist Charlie McCormick is familiar to many thanks to Charlie's Instagram following of over 70k. Less well known is Littlebredy's little brother, a roof garden in Bloomsbury, central London. It shares the same spilling generosity of flowers and edibles as the Dorset bolthole, but here the plants must be happy with rooftop life. Charlie shares his tips for a self-reliant garden entirely in pots.

The garden and the two-acre trial field next to Claire Austin's house in Wales is home to over 100 species and cultivars of herbaceous peony. The Austin name is synonymous with expert plantsmanship and brilliant plant selection, and after testing them in the field, Claire transplants the peonies into her garden where she notes their form, fragrance and suitability as cut flowers. Recommending 'Elsa Sass' and 'Bowl of Beauty' among others, cut just as the buds are opening and with no conditioning, Claire says a peony can outlast a rose in a vase and will fill a room with fragrance.

I hope you enjoy the issue,

Lucy Bellamy

LUCY BELLAMY, EDITOR



Enjoying the high life with container planting, page 66.

JASON INGRAM

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RACHEL WARNE

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Paeonia lactiflora 'Hot Chocolate' by Jason Ingram

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† Reader offer open to mainland UK residents only.

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RACHEL WARNE
Rachel photographed the garden of designers del Buono Gazerwitz, page 80. *"It's the pure delight of designers in sharing their personal gardens with you that makes shooting particularly special."*

JONNY BRUCE
Jonny visited Alain Dor's garden, page 72. *"Building development can threaten the tranquillity of an established garden – adapting his garden to a changing landscape is Alain's great success."*

ALEX MITCHELL
Alex climbed the ladder to look round Charlie McCormick's rooftop garden, page 66. *"I loved Charlie's laid-back approach and enthusiasm for colour. Just don't look down."*

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JAMES BASSON
James lives in the South of France where he runs Scape Design with his wife Helen, specialising in low-maintenance and dry gardens. He is a fervent advocate for creating sustainable landscapes. The winner of four Chelsea Gold medals, he was awarded Best in Show in 2017.

FERGUS GARRETT
Fergus was appointed head gardener at Great Dixter by Christopher Lloyd in 1993. He is passionate about passing on his knowledge through student and volunteer programmes at Dixter and through worldwide lectures. He was awarded an RHS Associate of Honour in 2008.

ANNA PAVORD
Anna's books include her bestseller *The Tulip* and most recently *Landskipping*. For 30 years she was *The Independent*'s gardening correspondent. In 2000 the RHS awarded her the Veitch Memorial Medal. She lives and gardens in Dorset.

DAN PEARSON
Dan is one of the UK's best-known garden designers, familiar to many through his gardening columns in the *Observer* magazine. Eight of his gardens, including the Tokachi Millennium Forest in Japan, have won awards and he was awarded Best in Show at Chelsea in 2015.

SARAH PRICE
Sarah is one of the UK's most sought-after garden designers who won worldwide recognition for her designs for the 2012 London Olympic Park. She won Gold at Chelsea in 2012 and was named 2016 Garden Columnist of the year by the GMG for her design series in *Gardens Illustrated*.

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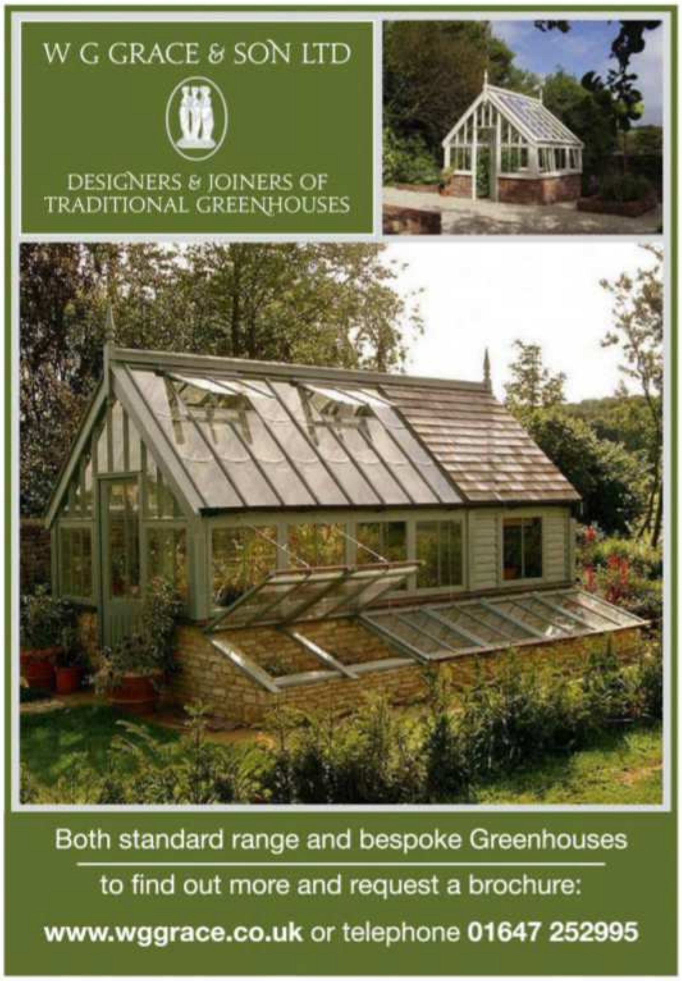
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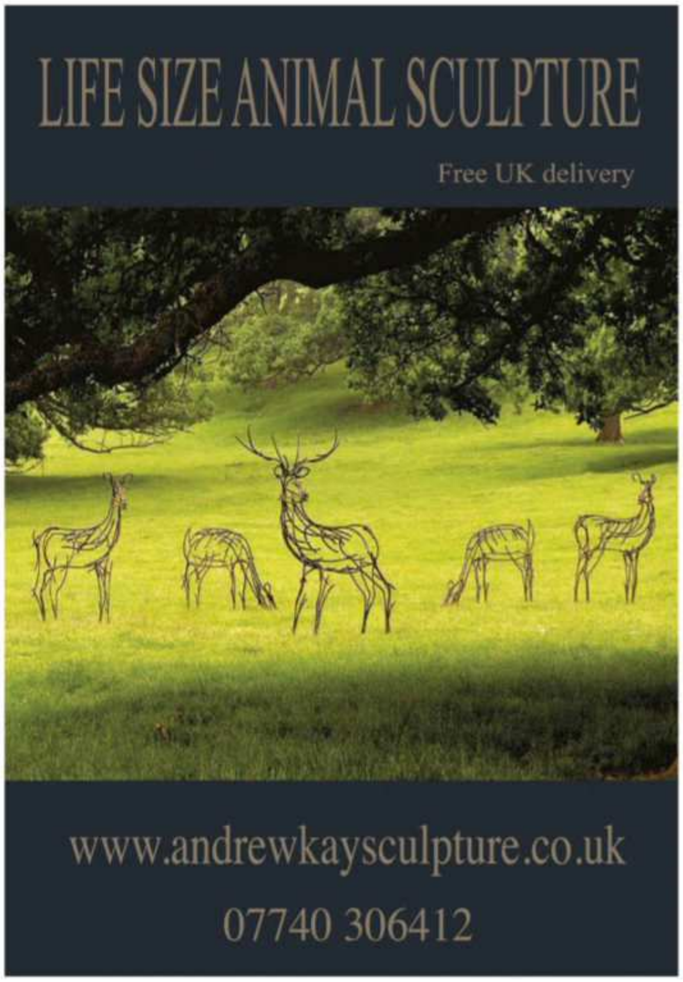
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- WEDNESDAY 13 JUNE £140

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Dynamic Planting at Trentham with Dr. Nigel Dunnett.

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Using grasses and perennials in the modern garden with Neil Lucas.

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Parham House and Gardens, West Sussex
Creating and developing a late summer border with Tom Brown & Marina Christopher.

- TUESDAY 11 SEPTEMBER £140

Arvensis Perennials, Wiltshire
A collaborative approach to design and planting with Charlotte Harris and Hugo Bugg.

- THURSDAY 13 SEPTEMBER £110

Walled Garden Treberfydd, Powys
Pruning – a beginner's guide with Mary Payne.

- TUESDAY 18 SEPTEMBER £130

The Coach House Garden, Gloucestershire
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Plants First with Sarah Price.

- WEDNESDAY 26 SEPTEMBER £130

Hunting Brook Gardens, Co. Wicklow, Eire
Understanding plants – choosing and using for long-term impact with Jimi Blake & Noel Kingsbury.

- TUESDAY 9 OCTOBER £140

Parham House and Gardens, West Sussex
Lightroom and post production for garden and plant photographers with Jason Ingram.

- FRIDAY 19 OCTOBER (10.30AM-5PM) £140

Forde Abbey, Dorset
Garden Masterclass Autumn Event with Rosy Hardy, Derry Watkins and Sarah Price.

- WEDNESDAY 24 OCTOBER £130

Larch Cottage Gardens, Cumbria
What makes a successful garden? with Annie Guilfoyle.

- WEDNESDAY 7 NOVEMBER £140

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DIG IN

What's happening, where to go, what's in flower and what to buy this month

JULIAN WINSLOW, ANTHONY COLEMAN

FRESHLY PICKED

Five years ago New Covent Garden Market launched British Flowers Week to celebrate the variety of British cut flowers and foliage. It's an event that keeps growing and now encompasses a host of events across the country that aim both to raise awareness of which British flowers are in season when and showcase Britain's floristry talent. Among last year's highlights was a series of specially commissioned designs from five featured florists, including Carly Rogers whose slice of meadow (above) was installed at New Covent Garden Market. This year sees the launch of a new competition to find Britain's best floral designer and the Garden Museum in London (left) is hosting an exhibition throughout British Flowers Week (18-24 June) of the six shortlisted floral installations, with the winner announced on 19 June. **britishflowersweek.com**

News

COMPILED BY ALYS HURN

CLOTH OF MANY COLOURS

Kaffe Fassett was the first living textile artist to have a one-man exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum. His quilts and needlepoint soft furnishings are the result of an obsession with colour and a lifelong love of flowers, a subject he discusses in depth in his book, Bold Blooms *(Abrams Books, 2016). You can see Fassett's work this month at the Victoria Art Gallery in Bath, where he will be joined by mosaicist Candace Bahouth for a joint exhibition,* A Celebration of Flowers, *which runs until 2 September.* **victoriagal.org.uk**

WILD CARD

During the summer, the historic meadows at Great Dixter House and Gardens in East Sussex are a showcase for native wildflowers such as Queen Anne's lace (*Anthriscus sylvestris*) and the spotted orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*). Now, these spectacular plants are the focus of a new card collection, 'In the meadow', from stationer Scribble & Daub. Artist Caroline Kent drew the illustrations at Dixter last summer and in her own garden, where she has created a wildflower meadow using cuttings gifted from Great Dixter's head gardener Fergus Garrett. Each card is letterpress-printed by hand on deckle-edged, Fabriano cream card and hand-painted. For every card sold, a donation will be made to the Great Dixter Charitable Trust. An individual blank card and envelope costs £5.50. **scribbleanddaub.com**

GROW IN STYLE

The new Latchmere Greenhouse is a great storage solution for gardeners with limited outdoor space. Designed with a roof that opens to provide air circulation and a bottom shelf with drainage holes, this stylish piece of kit is ideal for growing seedlings and hardening off young plants. The pine frame has been treated with a non-toxic stain and the wheels are lockable to keep it firmly in place. Measuring 180 x 86 x 44cm, it costs £345 from Garden Trading. **gardentrading.co.uk**

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In 2017, 250,000 people took part in The Wildlife Trusts' 30 Days Wild event, a challenge to do something wild every day for the month of June. This year the initiative is running again, with the theme of neighbourhood, to encourage people to help local wildlife and take part in community greening initiatives. The Wildlife Trusts is also launching its first ever Big Wild Weekend of wildlife events on 16-17 June. Over 100 events will take place across the weekend, including wild festivals, seashore safaris and wild picnics. To take part, simply sign up online. **wildlifetrusts.org/30dayswild**

COLOUR FIELDS

Mass plantings will be a colourful feature of three of the summer's RHS flower shows. At this month's RHS Chatsworth Flower Show, 12,000 *Cosmos bipinnatus* Razzmatazz Series (above) will dominate an area in front of Chatsworth House. Then in July visitors to the RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show can witness a purple meadow of *Verbena bonariensis* sweep along the Long Water, while at RHS Flower Show Tatton Park there will be 5,000 golden *Rudbeckia hirta* 'Prairie Sun' forming a sunshine field. **rhs.org.uk**

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Work for both the home and garden, with the latter on display throughout the grounds. 28 July – 9 September, 12-4.30pm. £7. doddingtonhall.com

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DIARY

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① **Gardening Scotland**
Show gardens, music, floral art and cookery demonstrations are just a few of the highlights of Scotland's Gardening Festival. 1-3 June, 10am-5pm. £17 per day. Royal Highland Centre, Ingliston, Edinburgh EH28 8NB. Tel 0131 333 0965, gardeningscotland.com

② **Workshop from Sussex Garden School**
Discover how to make a low-maintenance but beautiful garden with designer Juliet Sargeant. The workshop will cover suitable plant choices and gardening tips. 7 June, 10.30am-2pm. £65. Sussex Prairie Gardens, Morlands Farm, Wheatsheaf Road, near Henfield, West Sussex BN5 9AT. Tel 01273 300587, sussexgardenschool.com

③ **BBC *Gardeners' World* Live**
Among the gardens at this year's show are Owen Morgan's family garden for sponsor Tesco, comprising a raised pond, Mediterranean-inspired border, play area, wildlife area and outdoor dining space, and the Solutions Garden (shown right) by Professor David Stevens for Wyevale Garden Centres, which tackles conditions such as shade, acid and alkaline soils, weeds and water run-off. 14-17 June, 9am-6pm. From £24. NEC, Birmingham B40 1NT. Tel 0844 581 1340, bbcgardenersworldlive.com

④ **Delphinium Week**
See the fabulous collection of delphiniums in bloom in Godinton's Walled Garden and make the most of expert advice and plant sales during the event. 15-24 June, 1pm-6pm. £5. Godinton House Gardens, Godinton Lane, Ashford, Kent TN23 3BP. Tel 01233 643854, rhs.org.uk

⑤ **Where's Best to Place That Plant?**
Spend the day with Sue and Bleddyn Wynn-Jones at Crûg Farm Plants, visiting the trial beds and fields where they grow their rare, woody plants, and learn where in your garden to grow them. 16 June, 2-4.30pm. £15. Crûg Farm Plants, Griffith's Crossing, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL55 1TU. Tel 01248 670232, crug-farm.co.uk

⑥ **Divine Inspiration**
Join a weekend workshop of illustrated talks and drawing classes looking at the Divine in Nature and how this may be captured at Chalice Well Gardens in Glastonbury. It's led by Emma Clark, garden designer Adam Hunt and Tom Bree. 16-17 June. £250. For more details or to book email info@emma-clark.com

⑦ **Blenheim Palace Flower Show**
Gardening expert Carol Klein opens this year's show, which will feature show gardens, garden talks, a grand floral pavilion and floral art marquee in the stunning grounds of Blenheim Palace. 22-24 June, 10am-5pm. £25. Blenheim Palace, Woodstock, Oxfordshire OX20 1PP. Tel 01993 810530, blenheimflowershow.co.uk

⑧ **Rosemary Alexander's Open Garden**
Sandhill Farm House, the garden of Rosemary Alexander, principal of the English Gardening School, opens for the National Garden Scheme this month. Expect a rich mix of interesting garden areas, including a red border, grasses border, woodland area, and topiary and white garden, with superb horticulture throughout. 23-24 June, 2-5pm. £5. Sandhill Farm House, Nyewood Road, Rogate, Petersfield, Sussex GU31 5HU. Tel 07551 777873, ngs.org.uk

⑨ **Small Gardens Day**
Learn new techniques for creating maximum impact in the smallest of spaces, at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Led by tutors from the London College of Garden Design. 28 June, 10.30am-4.30pm. £100. Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 3AE. Tel 020 8332 5641, kew.org/kew-gardens/whats-on

⑩ **Sitting Spiritually Open Weekend**
An opportunity to try out Sitting Spiritually's lovely swing seats in a tranquil garden designed by Jarman Murph. Admission is free, but visitors are welcome to donate to garden charity Perennial. 30 June – 1 July, 10am-5.30pm. Sitting Spiritually Ltd, Bramble Hayes, Yawl Hill Lane, Lyme Regis, Dorset DT7 3RP. Tel 01297 443084, sittingspiritually.co.uk

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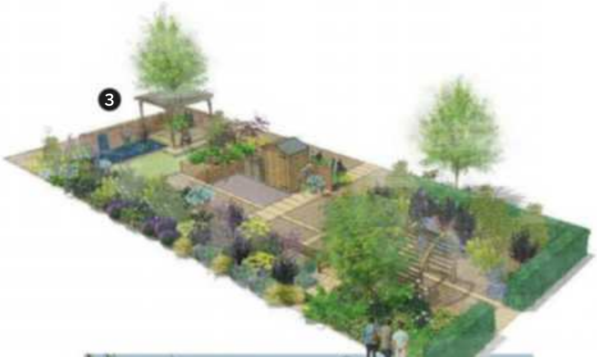
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Catherine MacDonald: The Landform Garden
Ascot Spring Garden Show 2018
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1. Personalised Garden Multi-Tool, £27, 01270 812717, idyllhome.co.uk **2. William Morris Garden Kneeler**, £32, 020 7942 2000, vam.ac.uk **3. Women's Original Garden Stripe Chelsea Boots**, £90, 0330 333 4290, hunterboots.com **4. Gardener's Soap Bar**, £5.75, 01424 814968, thefuturekept.com **5. Hozelock Cloud Controller Kit**, £119.99, 01437 531064, easygardenirrigation.co.uk **6. Lobster Pot Plant Supports in lichen green**, from £79, 0333 400 1500, harrodhorticultural.com **7. Protective body lotion with sunscreen, 150ml**, £27, 020 3637 4577, aesop.com **8. Assembly Grip Gloves**, £7.50, greatdixtershop.co.uk

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1. Elefant Beer Garden Chair, £278, 0800 096 0938, manufactum.co.uk **2. Sophie Conran Garden Dial Thermometer**, £29.99, 0114 233 8262, burgonandball.com **3. Husqvarna Automower 315X**, £2,100, husqvarna.com for stockists **4. Niwaki Topiary Shears**, from £149, 01747 445059, niwaki.com **5. Skagerak Cutter Bench in oak**, £589, **Skagerak Cutter Large Boxes (sold separately)**, £118 each, 01531 631044, husandhem.co.uk **6. Stainless Steel Dutch Hoe**, £24, 01279 401570, pedigreegarden.co.uk **7. Cascata Water Butt (245 litre)**, £159.95, 0333 400 1500, harrodhorticultural.com

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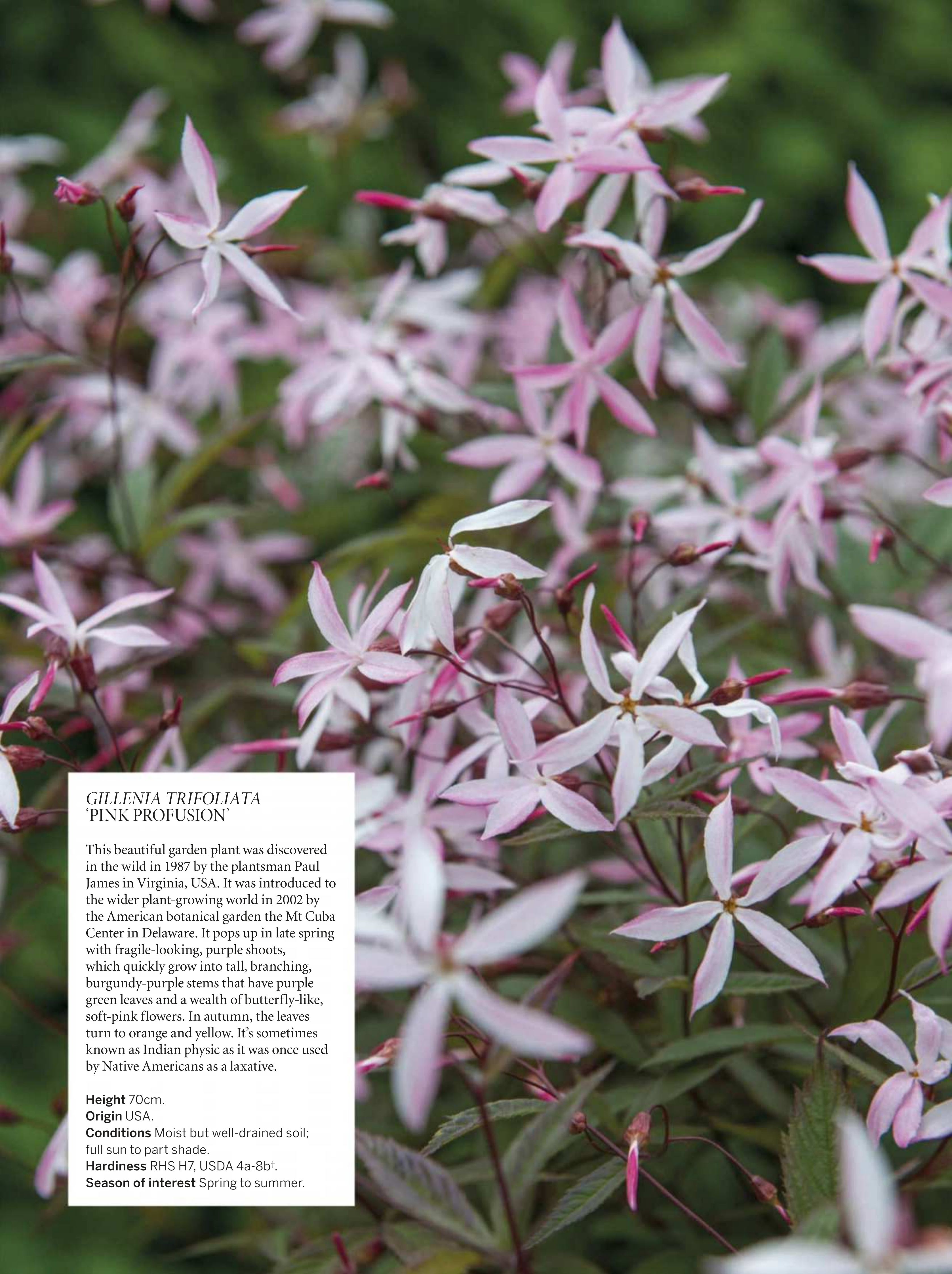


GILLENIA TRIFOLIATA ‘PINK PROFUSION’

This beautiful garden plant was discovered in the wild in 1987 by the plantsman Paul James in Virginia, USA. It was introduced to the wider plant-growing world in 2002 by the American botanical garden the Mt Cuba Center in Delaware. It pops up in late spring with fragile-looking, purple shoots, which quickly grow into tall, branching, burgundy-purple stems that have purple green leaves and a wealth of butterfly-like, soft-pink flowers. In autumn, the leaves turn to orange and yellow. It’s sometimes known as Indian physic as it was once used by Native Americans as a laxative.

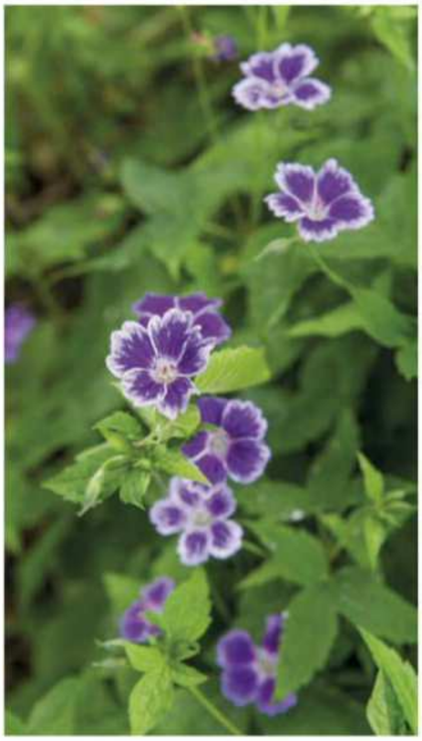
Height 70cm.
Origin USA.
Conditions Moist but well-drained soil; full sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b[†].
Season of interest Spring to summer.

Fleur van Zonneveld runs the Dutch nursery De Kleine Plantage. **dekleineplantage.nl**

JUNE PLANTS

This month Fleur selects plants for wildflower meadows and prairie plantings, plus a gentle self-seeder that is favoured by butterflies

WORDS FLEUR VAN ZONNEVELD PHOTOGRAPHS MAAYKE DE RIDDER



GERANIUM NODOSUM 'WHITELEAF'

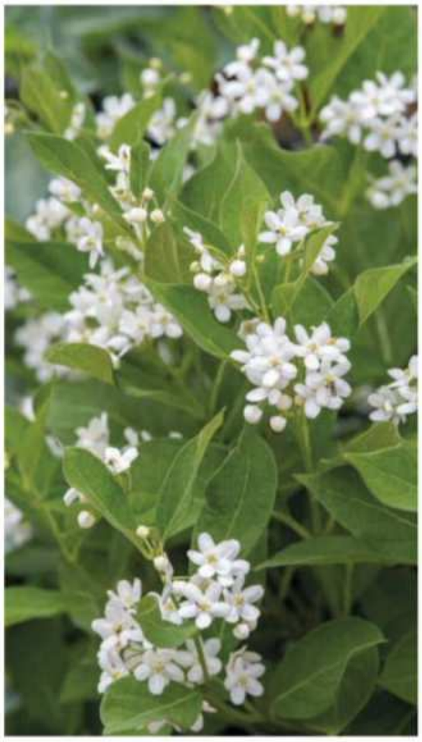
This *Geranium nodosum* cultivar barely seeds itself, which means we don't have to worry about weeding out thousands of seedlings, and can instead focus on its virtues, which are many. To start with there is its fresh, evergreen foliage, which is a lovely shade of dark green, and then there are the beautiful striped, purple-lilac flowers with white edges that last for months. It's also loved by butterflies. The name refers not to its leaf colour, but to the house where this form was found. It is a great addition for any difficult, shady or dry spot.

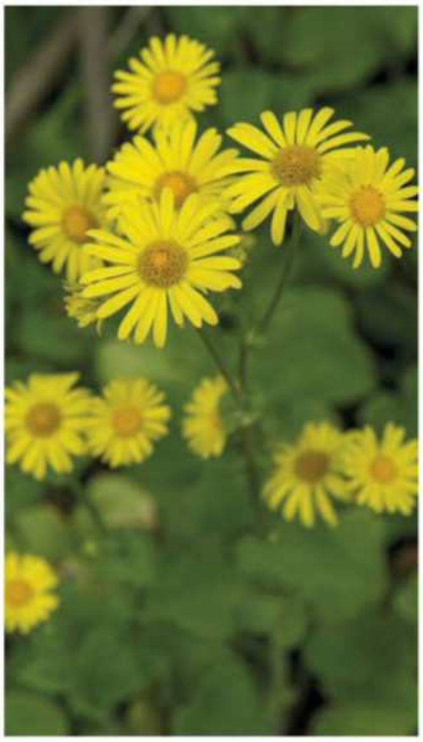
Height 30cm.
Origin Europe.
Conditions Moderately fertile soil; full sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H6.
Season of interest Spring to autumn.

CYNANCHUM ASCYRIFOLIUM

Until it starts flowering, this can seem a rather dull, albeit healthy looking, plant. But as soon as the deliciously scented, clusters of star-shaped, white flowers appear it becomes a pleasure to behold. It looks similar to many other plants in the *Apocynaceae* or dogbane family, especially the climbing genus *Stephanotis* and is sometimes known as false bush *Stephanotis*. It was collected in 1995 in Yunnan Province, China, growing in rocky soil, but it performs well in our Dutch clay soil, where it has proved a very hardy perennial.

Height 60cm.
Origin Japan, China, Korea.
Conditions Moist but well-drained soil; full sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Season of interest Summer.



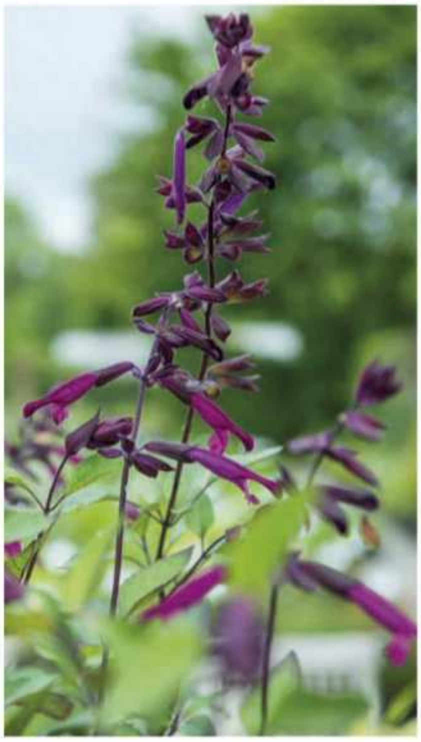


DORONICUM PARDALIANCHES

This natural-looking plant is perfect for brightening up a shady spot. It belongs to a group of naturalised, non-native plants we call *stinzenplanten* in the Netherlands, and its dainty, bright-yellow flowers appear like tiny suns when they appear among spring foliage in the shade of a tree. Bearing hairy leaves on hairy stems it spreads by underground runners, and forms an effective groundcover for almost every type of soil. It flowers continuously for three months, after which it dies down to prepare for the following spring.

Height 70cm.
Origin Europe, western Asia.
Conditions Moist but well-drained soil; part shade.
Hardiness RHS H5.
Season of interest Spring to summer.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.



SALVIA LOVE AND WISHES (= 'SERENDIP6')

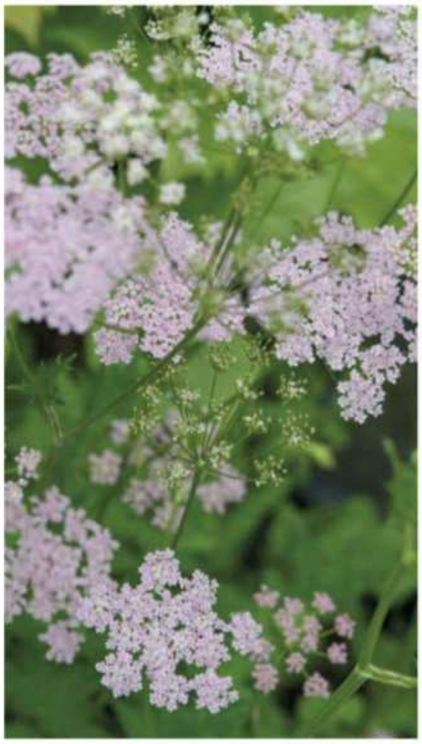
This relatively new salvia has been winning well-deserved plaudits and awards in both the UK and the Netherlands, since its introduction at the 2015 RHS Chelsea Flower Show. It was bred in Australia by John Fisher and is the third colour in his Wishes series following on from 'Wendy's Wish' and 'Ember's Wish'. A bushy salvia it flowers for months producing deep-purple and red flowers with matte-purple calyces on long, burgundy-red stems. Works equally well as part of a perennial border or grown in a pot.

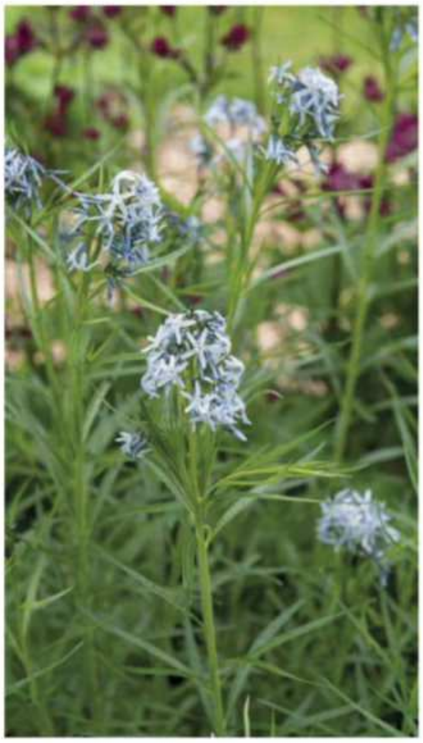
Height 80cm.
Origin Bred in Australia.
Conditions Moist but well-drained soil; full sun.
Hardiness RHS H3.
Season of interest Summer to autumn.

PIMPINELLA MAJOR 'ROSEA'

This lacy pink umbellifer is a welcome companion to the many white umbellifers we use in our garden. It is one of the tall meadow plants we call *hochstaudenflur* and is propagated from seed as well as vegetatively, which explains why there are so many different shades of pink in circulation. The deep pink varieties are far more interesting than the paler-pink ones. It looks like a pink Queen Anne's lace – and really does resemble precious lace. Its shiny, fern-like, green leaves also make it useful as a groundcover plant.

Height 60cm.
Origin Central Asia, Caucasus, Mediterranean region.
Conditions Moist but well-drained soil; full sun, part shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.
Season of interest Spring to summer.





AMSONIA TABERNAEMONTANA VAR. *SALICIFOLIA*

In early spring, the young shoots of this variety are instantly recognisable by their black-red colour. These create a lovely contrast with the open clusters of star-shaped, greyish, pale-blue flowers that appear in late spring. It's a slow-growing plant that will eventually produce long-lived sturdy arching clumps, with willow-like foliage that turns yellow in autumn. It's a perennial that works well in both prairie-style plantings or wildflower meadows.

Height 80cm.
Origin Southern and eastern North America.
Conditions Moist but well-drained soil; full sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.
Season of interest Spring to autumn.

PLACES TO VISIT

Recommended places to see seasonal plants at their best both in Europe and the UK

There are many flower-rich meadows of great note in the former Soviet bloc. **Kyrgyzstan**, a former Soviet republic in central Asia, stands out as a plantsman's paradise. A country around half the size of Germany, it has around 3,900 native species. In late June, early July, the nurseryman and plant specialist Brian Kabbes runs botanical tours to this virtually unexplored Asian country that borders China's Xinjiang province. We went in 2012 and I have never seen such a rich abundance of flora. Fields of foxtail lilies, *Linum olgae,* and many, many more – too many to mention; you can sometimes find more than 100 species in a single square metre. It is a truly amazing sight. You can find details of Brian's tour for June 2019 at kabbes.nl

For more than 20 years now our nursery De Kleine Plantage has exhibited at the **International Specialist Nursery Days** at Bingerden in the central Dutch province of Gelderland. It is one of the highlights of the Dutch plant show year, and takes place this year over the weekend of 15-17 June, offering as ever an incredible choice of rare and unusual plants. The gardens themselves are worth a visit at any time of year. The 23-acre estate, surrounded by a moat dug in 1791, is one of the oldest preserved estates in the Netherlands. It is made up of five separate gardens, including the original potager and exuberant borders, which include a large collection

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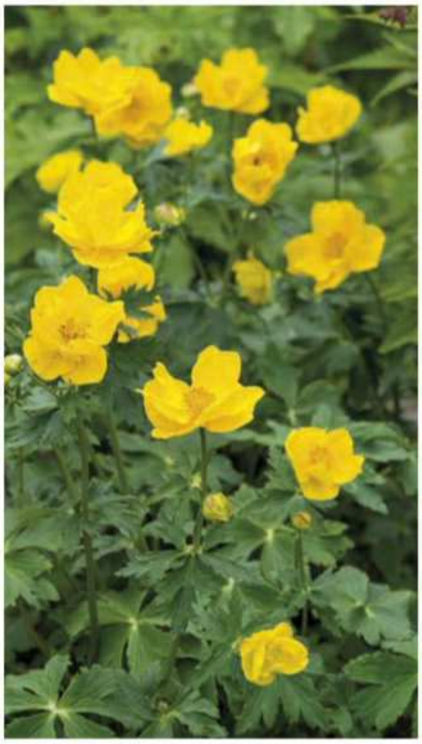
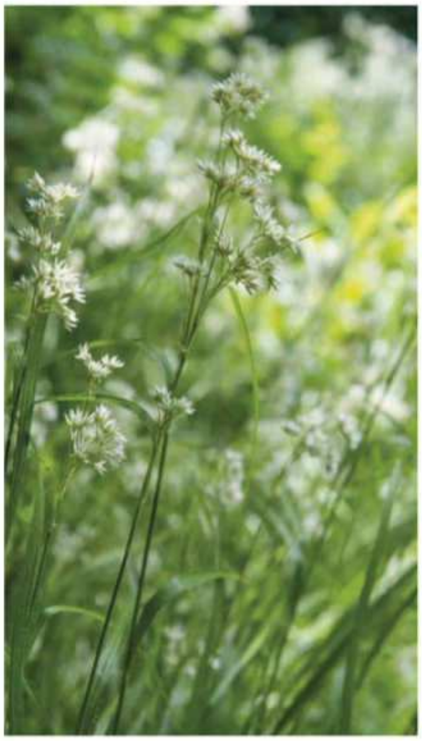
TROLLIUS BUDDAE

Plants from the genus *Trollius* are more commonly known as globeflowers, although in this case at least that name is somewhat misleading as the wide-open flowers look more like flat dishes. These flowers, which are large and golden yellow, are composed of petal-like sepals around smaller nectar-bearing petals. It's a real eye-catcher, all the more so as it flowers much later than other *Trollius* species. Give it enough fertiliser and moisture, and it will treat you to a second flowering in late summer. Ideal for growing along a riverbank, it also works well in a sunny border, and makes a wonderful cut flower too.

Height 70cm.
Origin Central Asia, China.
Conditions Moist soil; full sun.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Season of interest Spring to summer.





LUZULA NIVEA

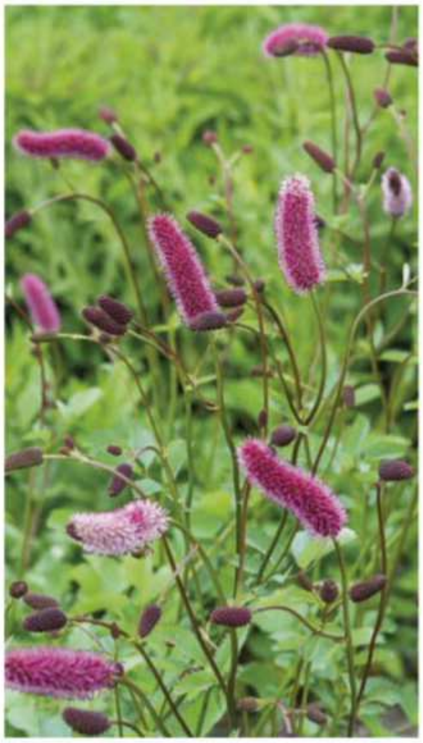
Despite appearances, *Luzula nivea* is neither a grass nor a sedge. It is in fact a member of the rush family or *Juncaceae*, and is more commonly known as snow-white, wood-rush. The snow white in the name comes from the sprays of fluffy white flowers that rise, from June to July, on rounded stems, above the grey-green foliage. It's a useful plant for shady areas, especially when planted en masse, or for filling in the spaces between shrubs. Its evergreen leaves with their tufted edges make an attractive addition to flower arrangements whether they are used fresh or dried.

Height 50cm.
Origin Central and southern Europe.
Conditions Moist to dry soil; part to full shade.
Hardiness RHS H5.
Season of interest Year round.

SANGUISORBA MENZIESII

This was our first sanguisorba and it is still our favourite – it's also much loved by butterflies. It flowers far earlier than other sanguisorbas, adding height to a border or prairie plantings from the end of May with thick, dusky-red spikes that are surrounded by a soft-pink mist. These brush-like flowers held on purple-red stems combine beautifully with its fernlike, grey-blue foliage. After flowering it can become a bit sloppy, but you can improve this with a rigorous cut. It works well as a cut flower and can be grown in a pot, but I think it looks best in a moist border alongside blue *Iris sibirica*. AGM*.

Height 1m.
Origin Alaska.
Conditions Average or moist soil; full sun or part shade.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Season of interest Spring to autumn.

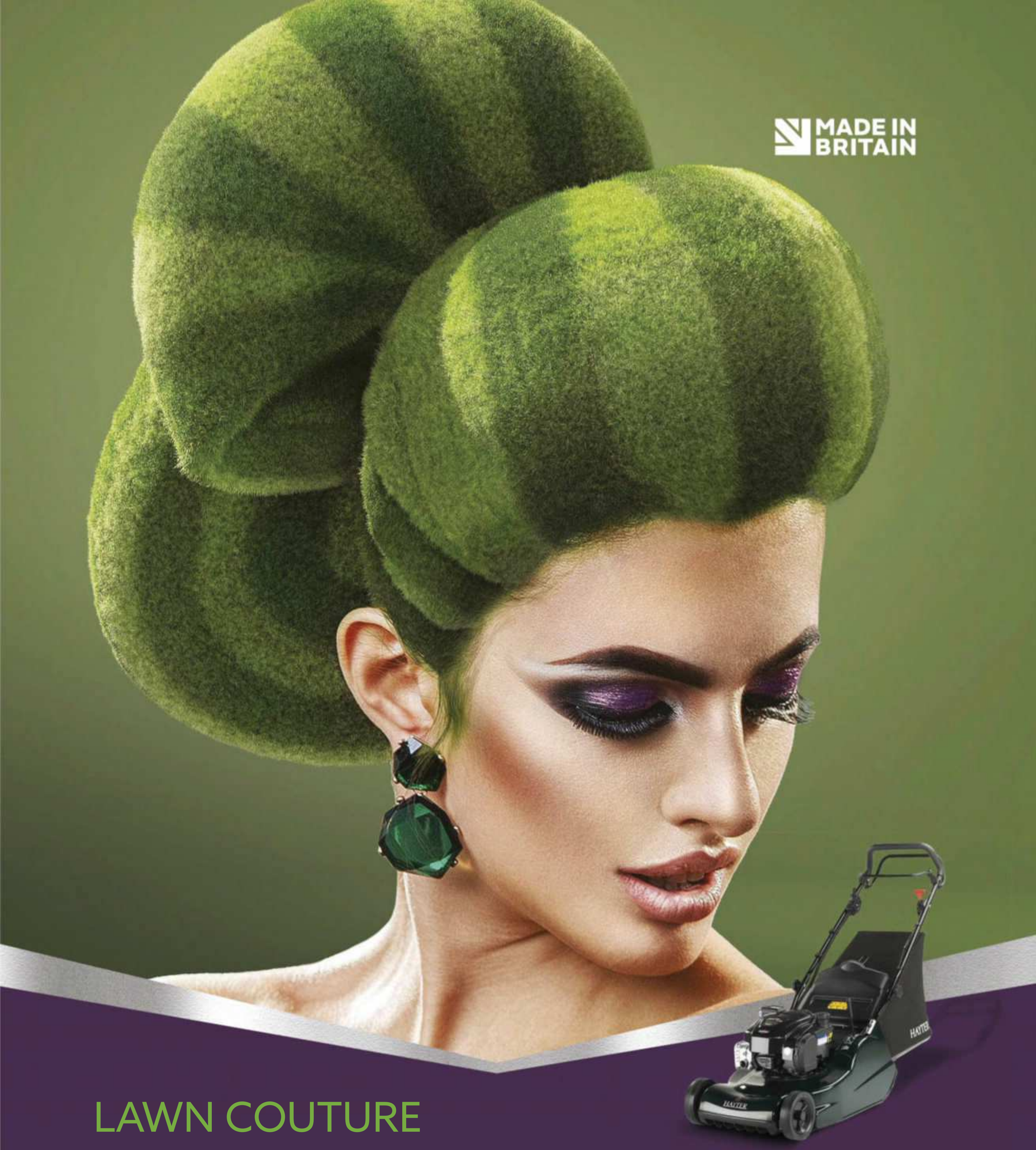


▷ of roses that are in full bloom in June. Bingerdenseweg 21, 6986 CE Angerlo, the Netherlands. Tel +31 (0)313 484238, bingerden.com

Bingerden is not far from **Hummelo**, the private garden of the renowned Dutch designer Piet Oudolf, which is opening to the public for the last time in 2018. For many years now Piet has used his garden to test out new designs and create some of the new perennials that are so important to his trademark style. Open 31 May – 7 July, Thursday – Saturday, 11am-4pm. Broekstraat 17, 6999 DE, Hummelo, the Netherlands. Tel +31 (0)314 381120, oudolf.com

Another designer's garden to visit this month, although one in a very different style, is that of Arabella Lennox-Boyd's country home **Gresgarth Hall** in north Lancashire. It's a gloriously romantic affair with deeply planted, herbaceous borders that are filled with colour through to autumn, beginning in June with nepeta, geraniums and alliums. There's also a lovely walled vegetable garden, nuttery and orchard. Open 10 June, 11am-5pm. Gresgarth Hall, Caton, Lancaster LA2 9NB. Tel 01524 771838, arabellalennoxboyd.com

Less than an hour's drive from Gresgarth, in the Lake District, is the exciting new garden at **Lowther Castle**. Within the castle's ruins, Dan Pearson has created a beautiful parterre where perennials, such as *Salvia pratensis* 'Indigo' and *Thalictrum* 'Elin' mix with ferns and climbers to create a lush feel of abandonment in the inner castle. Dan is currently creating a new Rose Garden, where briar roses will form the shape of a rose around a beautifully planted ornamental rose collection. Head gardener Martin Ogle is leading a behind-the-scenes tour of this new garden on 14 June. Lowther, Penrith, Cumbria CA10 2HH. Tel 01931 712192, lowthercastle.org



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TRAVEL

The Outsider

Horticulturist Hannah Gardner is fascinated by the British coastline, all 7,000 miles of it. But she has a particular affection for the Cornish coast, where childhood holidays fostered a love of open horizons, dramatic cliff tops and diverse native flora

WORDS **HANNAH GARDNER** ILLUSTRATION **ALICE PATTULLO**

My childhood holidays were spent on the slender peninsula of Cornwall where you are never far from the sea. A chunky flower press came on holiday too. For years a favourite possession, it was also my hobby. I recall precious time spent exploring hedge banks, beaches and cliff tops, filling the flower press and learning about coastal flora. I'm still fascinated by the UK's dramatic and complex perimeter of constantly shifting natural features and by the sheer variety of plants growing in the mild climes of the South West. The main habitats are heathlands and sea cliffs, but I've found flowery meadows too.

Inspiration

These fragile areas of native flora are now few and far between. More than 80 per cent of lowland heath in the UK has disappeared in the past 200 years, but remaining areas are now being carefully managed, giving us the opportunity to explore and engage with these less familiar ecologies. It's easy to bypass them on your way to an idyllic sandy cove, but travelling has made me appreciate what's beneath my feet and value the pristine wildness and open access of much of our coastline.

When to go

The cliffs are at their most colourful from May to September. Early summer is best for orchids, and if it's butterflies you're after, wait until the meadows grow tall, but note they are cut for hay in late July. Lizard Point is a prime location for watching dolphins, grey seals, seabirds and the occasional basking shark. In June, there are dusk walks on Goonhilly Downs to hear the churring call of the nightjar.

Where to go

The Lizard is known for its wildflowers. Cornish heath (*Erica vagans*) is abundant here. It has whorls of narrow leaves and distinctive pastel-pink flowers with a chocolate-coloured rim. Heathland normally occurs on well-drained, nutrient-deficient, acid soil, conditions that suppress decomposition and nutrient recycling so that plants have to adapt. Heathers have symbiotic relationships with microscopic fungi that develop in their roots. Common heather (*Calluna vulgaris*, identifiable by its opposite leaves) and the brighter, more robust, bell heather (*Erica cinerea*) often grow together. Tangled among the sultry summer purple of the heathers are dense low thickets of western gorse (*Ulex gallii*), the rich-yellow flowers providing yet more fodder for the bees. Low bushes of delicious bilberries (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) and the creamy flowers of the burnet rose complete the heathland tapestry. In boggy areas, sphagnum mosses thrive, providing anchorage for other interesting species such as the sticky, insectivorous sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*). As the heath breaks, there are soft-pink blooms amid the grasses; colonies of heath spotted orchid (*Dactylorhiza maculata*). Near Kynance Cove, the uncommon meadow saxifrage (*Saxifraga granulata*) once caught my eye.

Coastal wind prunes the growth of woody plants and nearer the waterline they also need to withstand the desiccating effects of salt spray. The leaf surface area of these plants is often reduced or they are protected by a waxy coating to minimise water loss. Sea holly (*Eryngium maritimum*) colonises freely among marram grass, and can be found in the dunes at Gunwalloe Church Cove.

If you like to surf as well as botanise, head to the rugged north Cornwall coast. St Agnes Beacon and Chapel Porth cliffs have wonderful flora. Find betony, spring squill and candy-pink clusters of common centaury (*Centaurium erythraea*) on your way down to the ruins of Wheal Coates tin mine. On the cliffs sea thrift (*Armeria maritima*), one of the prettiest coastal flowers, forms dense cushions, its dancing pink pompoms mesmerising in the wind.

Plant to grow at home

There are two hardy, floriferous native plants worth considering, both easily available in cultivation. The first, *Geranium sanguineum* (bloody cranesbill), has a useful low-spreading habit, reaching just 25-35cm. Large, single flowers of intense magenta contrast nicely with the dark-green foliage and appear from May to August. A pale-flowered form sometimes occurs naturally, but the combination of large flowers and deeply divided leaves make *in situ* identification straightforward. Requiring sun and well-drained soil, its coastal form (var. *prostratum*) is nestled in between boulders on the cliffs above Kynance Cove.

A second suggestion is *Sanguisorba officinalis* or great burnet, an elegant, airy perennial of damp grasslands. Usually found in rural northern England, it is present in the diverse damp inland grasslands of The Lizard, specifically on Goonhilly Downs. From June to September, dense, floral spikes of deep burgundy seem to float above the slender, branching stems and arching, pinnate leaves. Reaching up to 1m, it stands well into winter, providing structural interest. It associates well with its natural neighbours (soft grasses and meadowsweet). It needs some sun and moisture to thrive, but is tolerant of exposed sites. Once established, it seeds itself around.

Guides and maps

Field Guide to Orchids of Britain and Europe by Karl Peter Buttler (Crowood Press, 1991).
The Wild Flower Key by Francis Rose and Clare O'Reilly (Warne, 2006).
Online Atlas of the British and Irish Flora (brc.ac.uk/plantatlas)
You can also find information at **cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk**

Places to stay

Tremerlin Helford, Cornwall TR12 6JZ. Tel 07876 198894, tremerlin.co.uk for riverside seclusion and a 1920s artist vibe.

Trelowarren Estate Trelowarren,Mawgan, Helston,Cornwall TR12 6AF. Tel 01326 221224, trelowarren.com offers stylish self-catering eco houses in the heart of The Lizard, with pool and tennis courts.

A Souvenir from CORNWALL
Map of CORNWALL
ERICA VAGAN
Bloody Cranesbill
ouvenir from ORNWALL

GARDENING TALENT

Becky Crowley

Becky is cut-flower gardener at Chatsworth, growing flowers for the house and associated events. She has won a keen Instagram following with her seasonal glimpses of the blooms she's growing

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

First plant love As a child I loved moss, so much so that I asked my dad to bring a bag of it back from a trip to the Yorkshire Dales. I grew up on a 1970s-built suburban estate in Grimsby; an entirely moss-less place, so for me, moss was the stuff of camping trips to the countryside with family, and walks in woodlands with Gran.

Horticultural heroes From a cut-flower growing perspective, Sarah Raven and Erin Benzakein have been an incredible source of inspiration and knowledge. As has the Flowers from the Farm network; there are some extremely knowledgeable and determined flower folk working throughout Britain who inspire me daily.

Favourite garden Little Sparta, which was created by the late Ian Hamilton Finlay at his home in the Scottish Pentland Hills. It's the only garden I've ever been to that feels like an entire art work.

Worthwhile tip for every gardener Learning to be patient. I feel like gardening has force-fed me patience over the years. No matter how much of a rush I'm in, the plants and seasons will just carry on doing their thing,

With whom would you most like to have tea in the garden? The Kitchen Garden (in which I grow cut flowers), was the idea of the late Deborah Devonshire, our current Duke's mother. She had the garden built in the early 1990s by her head gardener Jim Link and his staff. I never met Deborah and now she's passed into the realm of legends.

What's the next big task you'll be tackling? Early June is all about getting the tender plants out from the cold frames and into the garden. This will include plants such as the dahlias, cosmos, salvias, cobaeas, etc. There's also the small matter of the RHS Chatsworth Flower Show (6-10 June), which has many associated events that require large numbers of garden flowers.

Biggest challenge facing gardeners today Environmental responsibility; finding alternatives to the chemicals and plastics that have become standard in the industry, as well as working with more sustainably sourced materials. It's far from the easy option and it's very much a work in progress for me, but it's at the forefront of my mind as I work. ❑

Further information

Instagram: @beckycrowley_. Becky is teaching a course at Sarah Raven's garden Perch Hill on 10 July. sarahraven.com

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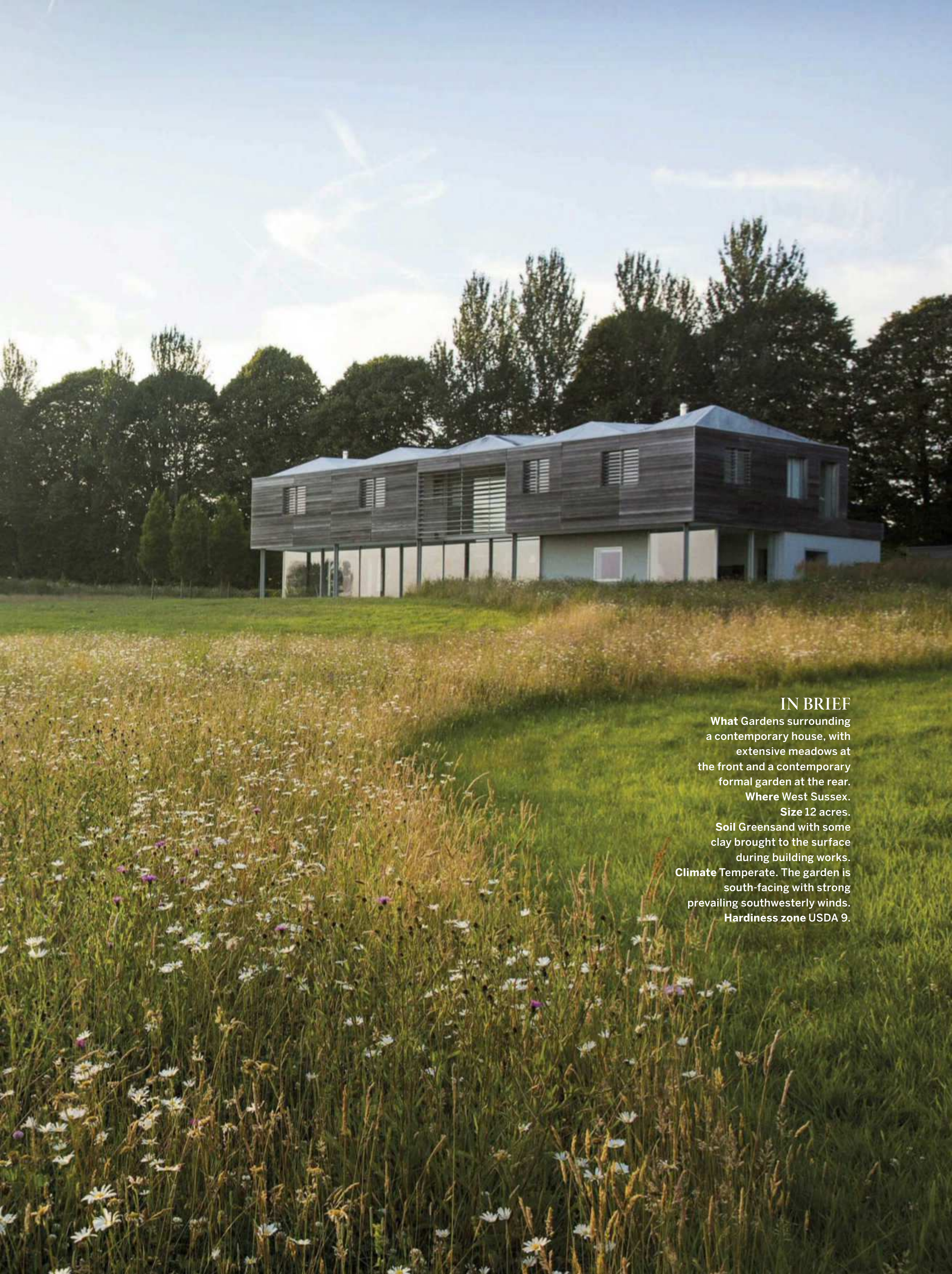
LIVING IN THE LANDSCAPE

Andy Sturgeon's skilful design roots a contemporary home in its natural surroundings with a garden of two halves – wild and formal

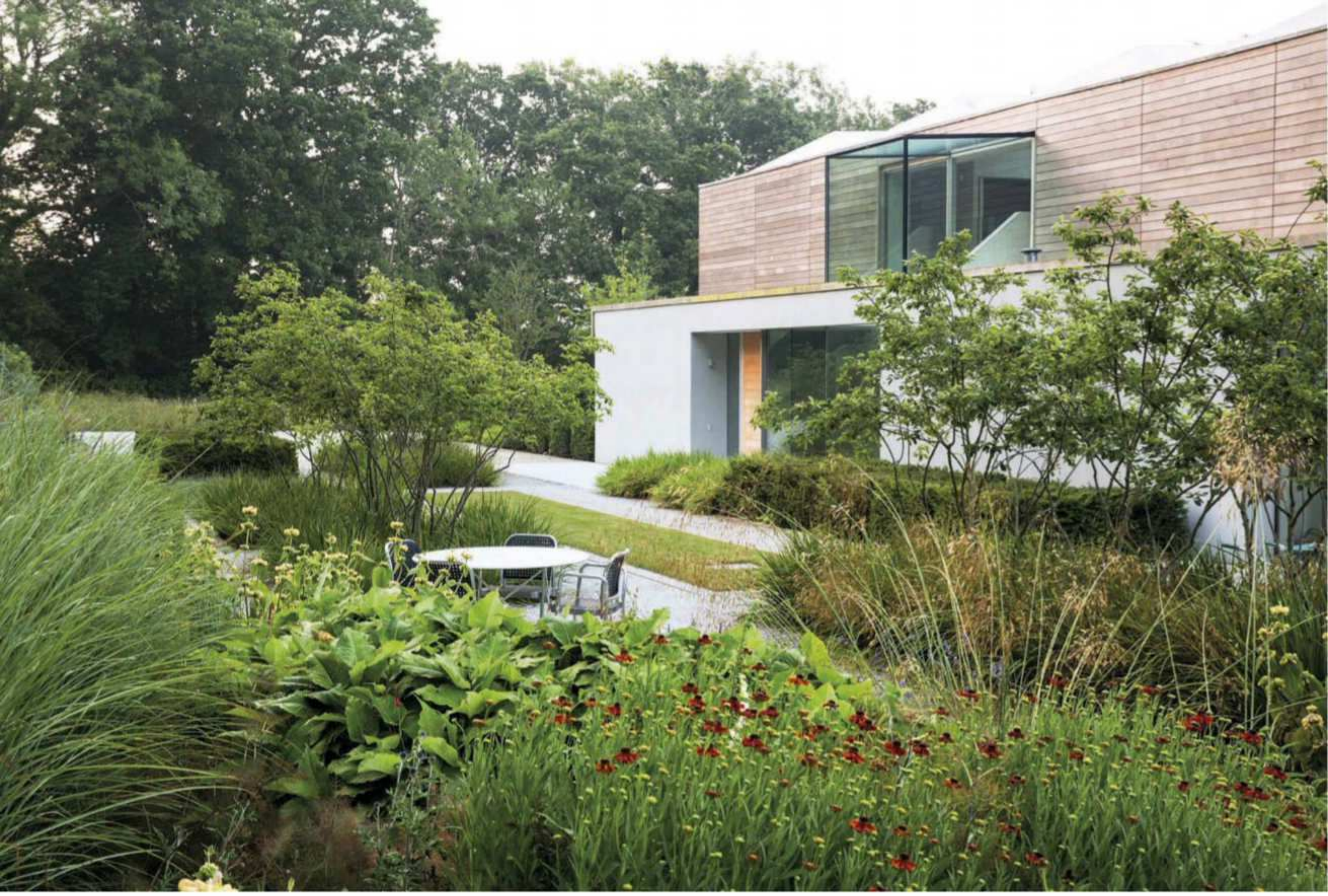
WORDS STEPHANIE DONALDSON PHOTOGRAPHS RACHEL WARNE

Curving wildflower meadows and informal areas of mown grass sweep up to the award-winning glass and wood house, allowing uninterrupted views towards the South Downs.



IN BRIEF

What Gardens surrounding a contemporary house, with extensive meadows at the front and a contemporary formal garden at the rear.
Where West Sussex.
Size 12 acres.
Soil Greensand with some clay brought to the surface during building works.
Climate Temperate. The garden is south-facing with strong prevailing southwesterly winds.
Hardiness zone USDA 9.



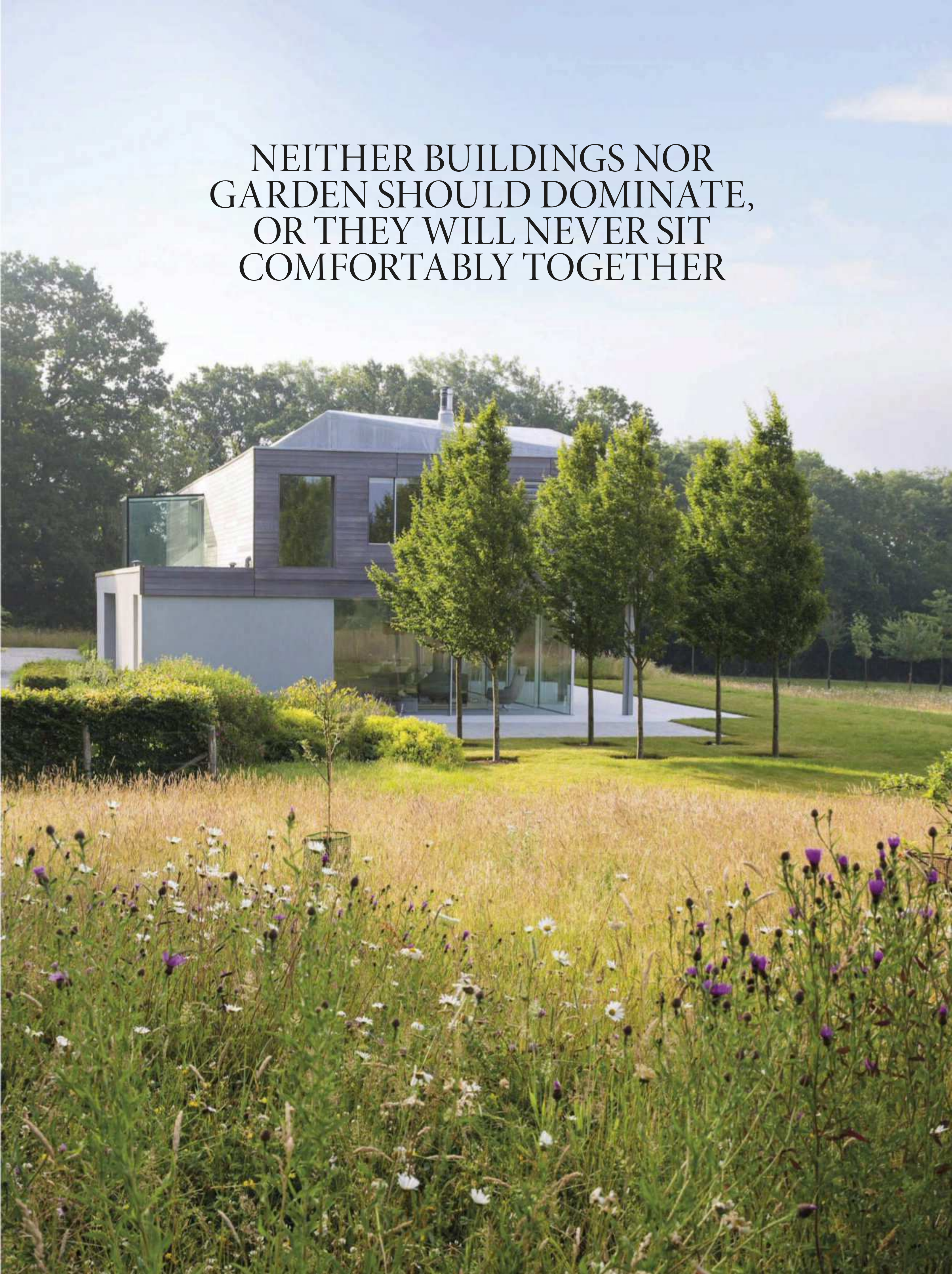
Award-winning architecture creates its own challenges for the garden that surrounds it – neither should dominate, or they will never sit comfortably with one another. When this contemporary glass and timber home in rural West Sussex replaced an unremarkable house surrounded by paddocks, its owners wanted to create an appropriate setting for their new home – a garden that would root it in the landscape. They decided that garden designer Andy Sturgeon was the man for the job. With his architectural approach, they were sure he would be able to work with their architect and they were attracted by his use of wild and colourful planting. The feeling was mutual. Working on a new-build property with clients who are already interested in design is the type of job that Andy likes best. Much of the lower floor of the house is glazed and transparent, and has been designed to blur the distinction between indoors and outdoors. Andy felt the expansive views towards the South Downs at the front of the property should not be interrupted by a garden. "I didn't want to compete with those views," he says. Instead – beyond the terrace and a velvety strip of lawn – Andy has planted extensive wildflower meadows that lead the eye out into the wider landscape. Broad, curving mown paths wind through them, inviting exploration. Hornbeams, oaks, katsuras and field maples line the newly snaking driveway and are strategically planted in groups to allow glimpses of the house on the approach. Bunds formed to the southwest of the house are also planted with a meadow mix. They break the previously flat view (a legacy of the former paddocks) and conceal a useful utility area for bonfires and composting.

The mood behind the house is very different – here there is more of a feeling of enclosure, which is defined not only by the buildings but also by a row of trees that form the northern boundary. "My clients and I agreed that a formal, contemporary house needed a formal, contemporary garden and I felt this was the right place to put it," says Andy. "I designed it so that as you pull up in your car you can see the front door, but to reach it ▷

Above Mature trees on the boundary give a feeling of enclosure to the garden at the rear of the house. Tucked in among the planting, which includes the tall Turkish sage *Phlomis russeliana* and the bright-orange *Helenium* 'Moerheim Beauty, is one of several seating areas that allow the owners to follow the sun.

Right A group of six fastigiate hornbeams punctuate the lawn next to the house, framing the view to the west from the main room on the ground floor and softening the outline of the building.

NEITHER BUILDINGS NOR GARDEN SHOULD DOMINATE, OR THEY WILL NEVER SIT COMFORTABLY TOGETHER



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MAKING A CONTEMPORARY FORMAL GARDEN IN A RURAL SETTING

- **Choose trees that will harmonise with the wider landscape** – in this garden, the newly planted trees include native oaks, silver birches, field maples and hornbeams **(1)** to reflect the surrounding woodlands, while close to the house are multi-stemmed amelanchiers **(2)**.
- **Keep planting low in front of windows so views remain unimpeded** – Andy has used *Hakonechloa macra* against the house **(2)**, then a narrow strip of lawn and a bed of 'Hidcote' lavender to allow full transparency.
- **Don't try to compete with a great view** – however good the planting between the house and the view, the view will always dominate – and it is maintenance-free. But remember open sites with good views can be windy so be sure to incorporate sheltered corners.
- **Planting can be more informal further away from the house** – in this garden, billowy shrubs, interplanted with bulbs and perennials, lead up to the boundary of mature trees.
- **Keep the architectural planting close to the house** – here a grid of long rectangular **(3)** beds set into paving match the clean, simple lines of the building.
- **Materials on paths and terraces can vary, but should be of the same palette** – here there is a textural change from sleek sandstone **(3)** on the main path and terrace to setts **(4)** and self-binding Breedon gravel as you move further away from the house.

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EIGHT KEY PLANTS

1 *Lavandula angustifolia* 'Hidcote'
'Hidcote' lavender is planted alongside paths to release its fragrance as you brush past; it also attracts pollinators. 50cm. AGM*. RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b†.

2 *Acanthus mollis*
The architectural flower spikes provide contrasting colour and shape among lower-growing companions. 1.5m. RHS H6, USDA 7a-10b.

3 *Cistus* x *purpureus*
The foliage releases a resinous scent and the tissue-paper-like flowers provide splashes of colour. 1m. AGM. RHS H4.

4 *Helenium* 'Moerheim Beauty'
A perfect addition to the sunniest borders where it intermingles with shrubs and grasses, producing a succession of copper-red daisies throughout the summer. 1m. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

5 *Leucanthemum vulgare*
The wildflower meadows feature a changing tapestry of flowers, including swathes of ox-eye daisies. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b. 1m.

6 *Phlomis russeliana*
Known as Turkish sage, although actually from Syria, it has whorls of pale-lemon flowers on tall, erect stems accompanied by heart-shaped leaves. 1m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

7 *Echinops ritro* 'Veitch's Blue'
This long-flowering, prickly globe thistle with deep-blue flowers is much loved by pollinators. If cut hard back after flowering, it produces a second flush. 1m. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

8 *Alchemilla mollis*
Being resistant to rabbits and deer, this is included in the plantings outside the garden's fenced area. 50cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

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Hummocks of sun-loving plants including, *Cistus* x *purpureus*, *Acanthus mollis* and *Nandina domestica* spill on to a path of Breedon gravel.

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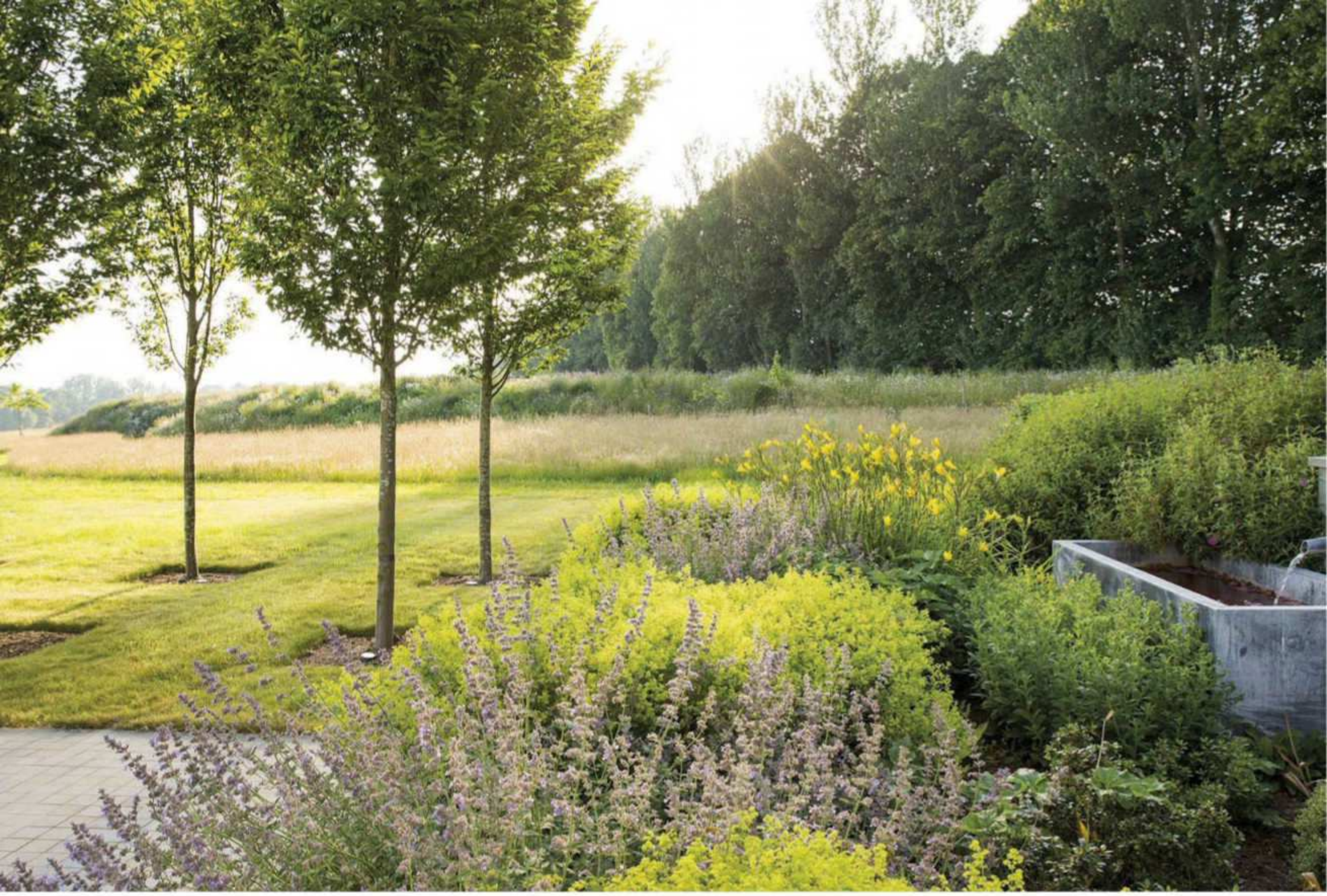
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.



▷ you have to journey through the garden from the outset. The arrival, with its formal borders, straight paths and lawn, is very structured.” Either side of the paths, low-clipped blocks of yew are interplanted with perennials and grasses, including *Geranium macrorrhizum* ‘Ingwersen’s Variety’ and *Hakonechloa macra*. Clusters of amelanchier are underplanted with white-flowered *Libertia chilensis* and a long, low bed of ‘Hidcote’ lavender adds fragrance and colour. As the planting moves away from the house, it gradually becomes softer and more colourful, with a mixture of shrubs, grasses and herbaceous perennials woven together to form undulating borders. A beech hedge at the western end of the garden disguises the fence that is essential to keep the rabbits, deer and badgers at bay, and also provides shelter from the strong prevailing southwesterlies. Tucked into the lee of the hedge, a group of metal planters raised up on brick piers allow the owners to grow a few vegetables.

“Living in this landscape is my clients’ primary reason for being here,” says Andy. “So I have created different pockets with seating areas so that they can chase the sun round the garden and be just a step away from the nature that surrounds them.” While most of these areas look outwards, there is a small, sheltered spot outside the ground-floor bedroom window on the eastern end of the house that is entirely enclosed by a stand of *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* ‘Karl Foerster’, allowing the owners to enjoy the morning sun in complete privacy.

It’s a clever trick to pull off, creating two gardens with such distinct characters as the setting for this modern house. The owners think it a great success and revel in the view from every window. It’s no wonder that they look forward to Andy’s visits as he continues to offer guidance in maintaining and developing this much-loved garden. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Find out more about Andy’s work at **andysturgeon.com**

Above Rabbit- and deer-resistant plants including *Alchemilla mollis*, hemerocallis and *Nepeta racemosa* ‘Walker’s Low’ have been planted on the edge of the terrace outside the fenced area of the garden.

Right above Sheltered from the prevailing wind by the hedge, the raised metal planters were a late addition to the design; they allow the garden owners to grow a few herbs and vegetables.

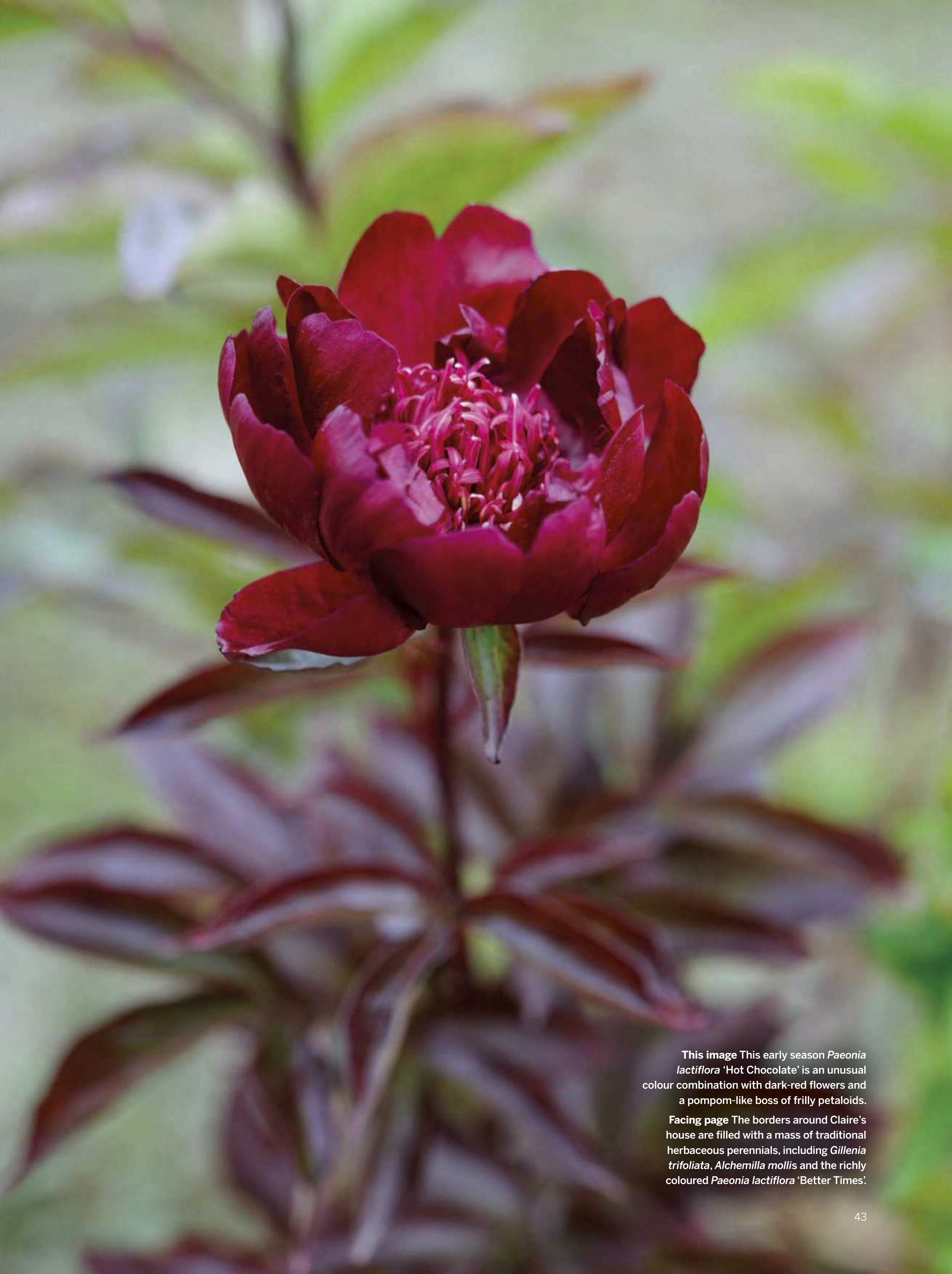
Right below The meadow in front of the house has been kept largely free of planting to allow the owners to enjoy the views of the South Downs, although a wildflower-covered bund across adds a gentle rise of colour within view of the house.

IT'S A CLEVER TRICK TO PULL OFF, CREATING TWO GARDENS WITH SUCH DISTINCT CHARACTERS

PERFECT PEONIES

Nursery owner Claire Austin grows over 100 different herbaceous peonies in her garden and trials field to find the very best

WORDS **MATTHEW BIGGS** PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM**



This image This early season *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Hot Chocolate' is an unusual colour combination with dark-red flowers and a pompom-like boss of frilly petaloids.

Facing page The borders around Claire's house are filled with a mass of traditional herbaceous perennials, including *Gillenia trifoliata*, *Alchemilla mollis* and the richly coloured *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Better Times'.

The name Claire Austin is synonymous with herbaceous plants. Her nursery in mid Wales is often the first stop for many plant lovers looking for hardy perennials. Among the specialist plant collections that she offers is one of her personal passions: peonies – and there are plenty to be found both in her nursery and her garden. "My father [the rose specialist David Austin] started a peony collection in the early 1980s," says Claire. "When he abandoned them in favour of roses, I took over."

Two acres of Claire's five-acre nursery are given over to peonies where she grows more than 100 different species and cultivars. "I usually stick with my favourites, such as 'Dinner Plate', 'Elsa Sass' and 'Sarah Bernhardt'," she says. "But it varies from year to year. If something new comes along and is worthwhile, it will certainly be included." Her peonies are field grown and sold as bare-root plants as she says these establish better than those grown in pots, where the roots can become restricted. They're plants she feels have much to offer gardeners. Easy to grow and requiring little maintenance, they are sculptural in spring when the stems emerge, have architectural foliage and glorious flowers, so provide several seasons of interest. They start flowering in mid May with the early hybrids and species and reach their climax in mid June.

Many also make excellent cut flowers and can last longer in water than roses, although the strength of their perfume can vary. "Some fill a room, particularly 'Monsieur Jules Elie', whose fragrance reminds me of roses; others, such as 'Bowl of Beauty', you only notice when the flowers are in a warm room and the perfume of 'Shirley Temple' is so subtle, it only becomes apparent when you gently bury your nose among the soft petals."

If you are growing for cutting, you'll need patience, as it can take three years or more, depending on soil conditions, for the best cutting cultivars to produce enough blooms. Claire cuts flowers at random to discover which are best and always cuts them just as they are opening. "I never condition them," she says. "Too much trouble, they are just thrust into a vase and I enjoy their beauty."

Peonies also feature widely in her own garden, which she started planting in 2011. Currently, it covers an area of around an acre – although it is constantly being extended – and is divided into four square borders, all freely planted in a cottage garden style. "Peonies are better planted with companions that complement rather than contrast," says Claire. Hardy geraniums, such as *Geranium* Dragon Heart (= 'Bremdra') and *G.* 'Blue Cloud', *Alchemilla mollis* and salvias, work well, and Claire extends interest with asters, heleniums and late-flowering *Aconitum carmichaelii* 'Arendsii'. "I use the garden to learn about plants, and how they grow," explains Claire. "It's also where I experiment to find the best combinations. In a garden you can see the rhythm of the planting and look at them as individuals."

Many peonies, also have glorious autumn colour; a feature that is often overlooked. "The colour is richer if they have been well watered followed by cold, frosty nights. During dry summers they tend to colour up early – even in late August." Wherever the season, peonies always enjoy the chance to shine. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Claire Austin Hardy Plants, White Hopton Farm,
Wern Lane, Sarn, Newtown, Powys SY16 4EN.
Tel 01686 670342.
Web claireaustin-hardyplants.co.uk
Open Garden and nursery open 2 June 2018, 10am-4pm.

Turn the page for 26 key peonies

6 TIPS FOR GROWING PEONIES

Plant between late October and mid February, in full sun or part shade, in soil that is never waterlogged.

The leaf buds should be no more than 2.5cm below the soil surface and the planting hole wide enough to accommodate the roots comfortably.

Support taller cultivars when the stems are around 15cm high
Feed every three years in spring, with bonemeal or general fertiliser.

Organic matter scorches the emerging buds in spring, so mulch as far away from the central crown as possible.

Remove old leaves to discourage diseases. Peony wilt is worse during damp weather. If it becomes a problem, dispose of infected parts away from the garden or spray with fungicide.

Peonies do not mind being moved – especially if they are not divided. Divide plants when they are dormant, from late October to the end of January, and ensure that each division has at least three buds.

Claire's garden on the Shropshire-Powys border is overflowing with cottage garden favourites, such as *Lychnis coronaria*, *Gillenia trifoliata*, and several astrantias and echinops. "We moved here seven years ago," says Claire. "Not just because the surrounding countryside is so beautiful but because the soil, a rich clay loam, is ideal for herbaceous perennials."

26 KEY CLAIRE AUSTIN PEONIES

1 *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Bowl of Cream'
Every petal of the smooth, scented, creamy-white, double flowers, curves inwards, forming a bowl-like centre. Flowers from early mid season to late season. 80cm. RHS H6†.

2 *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Pink Cameo'
Lavender-pink petals with a central boss of baby pink petalioids. A prolific flowerer and very fragrant. 1m. RHS H7.

3 *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Pillow Talk'
The beautiful, scented, powder puff flowers of soft, pure pink are freely produced on strong stems boasting lush, dark-green leaves. Mid-season. 80cm.

4 *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Karl Rosenfield'
Has fragrant, bright-magenta double blooms and a boss of golden stamens that become more prominent as the blooms mature. 80cm. RHS H6.

5 *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Florence Ellis'
The pure-white flowers, notched petals and cream petaloids of this lightly scented cultivar make it a good cut flower. 85cm.

6 *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Albert Crousse'
A late-flowering and gently scented old cultivar with soft-pink double flowers. Its tightly packed petals are flecked with crimson and suffused with cream. 90cm. RHS H6.

7 *Paeonia* 'Bridal Icing'
The cream central petals of this gorgeous, scented peony look like a scoop of ice cream. Good for cutting. Mid to late season. 90cm.

8 *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Auguste Dessert'
A reliable, deep-rose-pink, semi-double with deep-yellow stamens, fragrant flowers and good autumn foliage. Flowers mid to late season. 90cm. RHS H6.

9 *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Nymphe'
Its deep-pink flowers are strongly scented and like most single peonies, an excellent nectar source for bees. Late season. 80cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

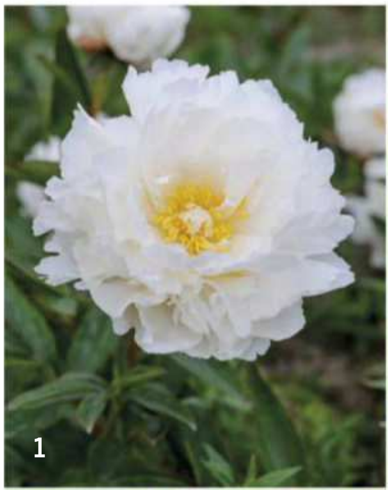
10 *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Paul M Wild'
One of the best reds for a cut flower; the brilliant, rich red of the double flowers is very pure. Mid season. 90cm. RHS H6.

11 *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Mr GF Hemerik'
Deep-pink petals surround a dome of broad, cream petaloids that fade with age. An easy peony to grow. Mid-season. 1m. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

12 *Paeonia* 'Coral Charm'
An impressive, coral-coloured, semi-double. Its long-lasting flowers age to soft peach and are carried on long, red stems. Can last for ten days as a cut flower. 85cm. AGM*. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

13 *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Philippe Rivoire'
Very dark crimson with entwined central petals, like a rose. Can be shy to bloom, but wonderful when it does. Richly scented. Flowers late season. 85cm.

Turn the page for more key peonies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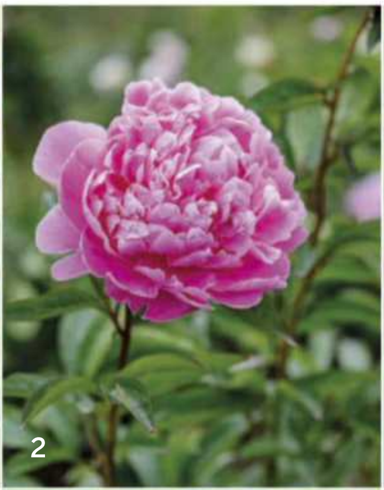
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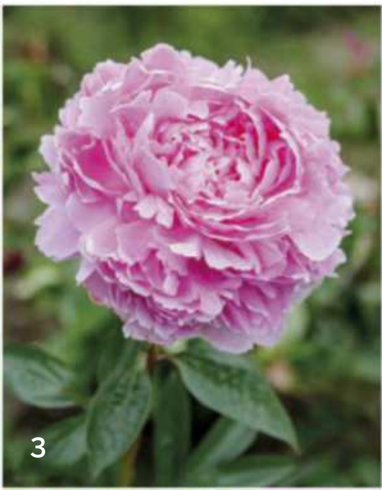
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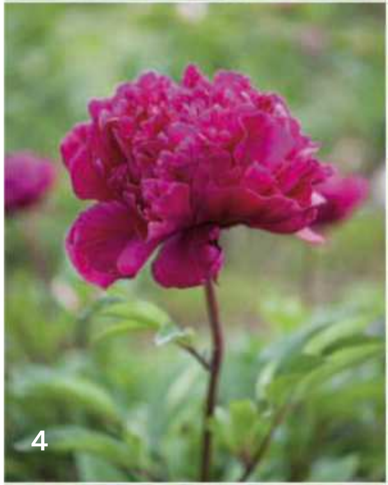
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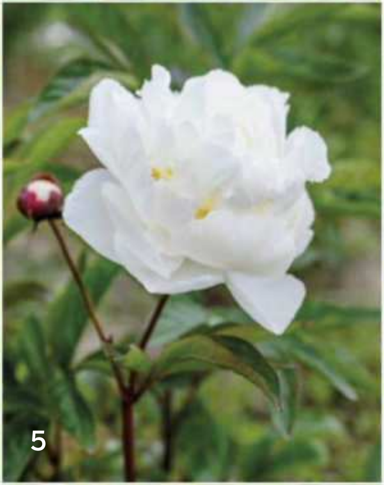
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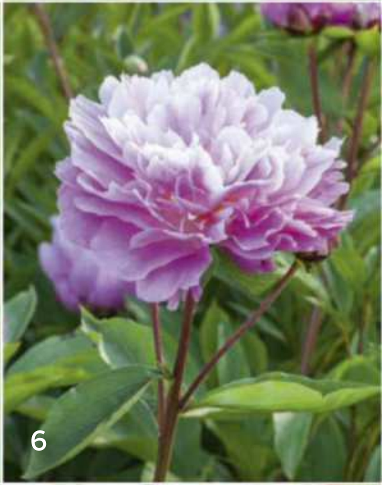
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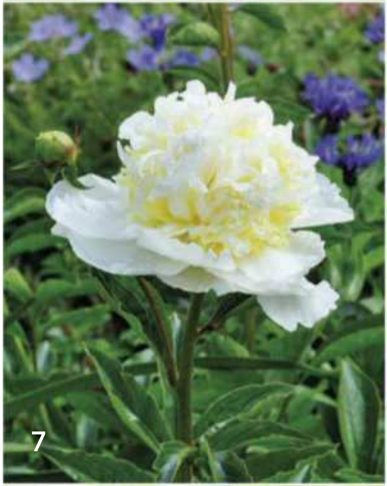
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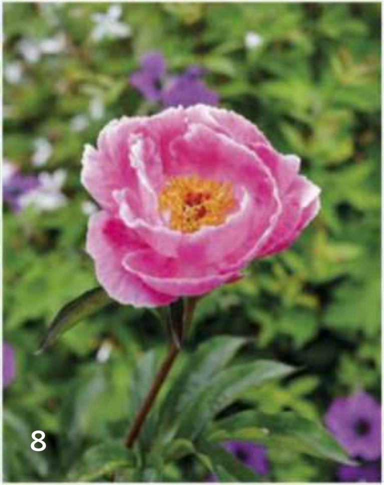
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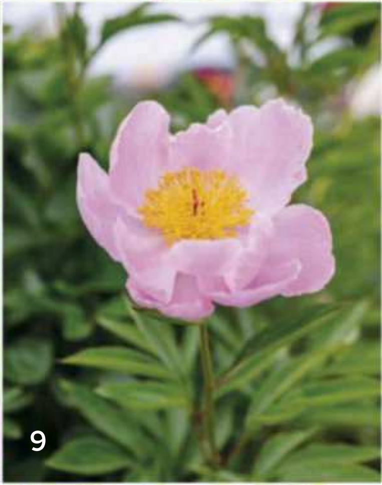
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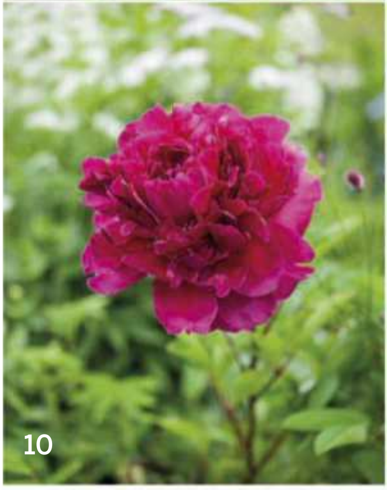
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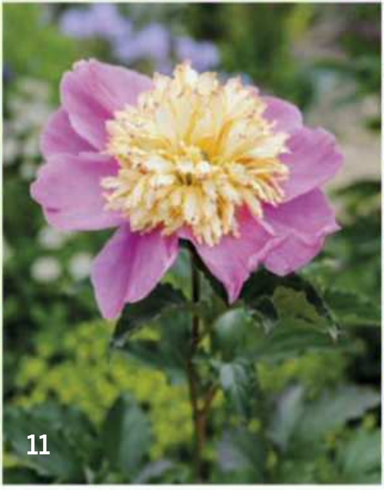
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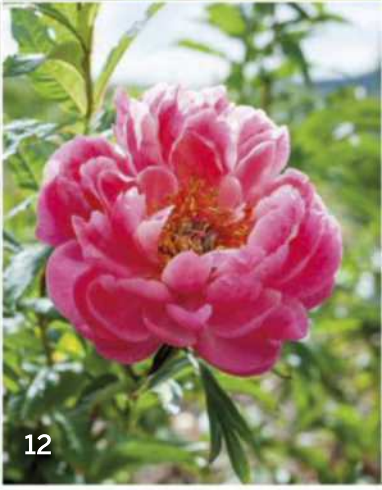
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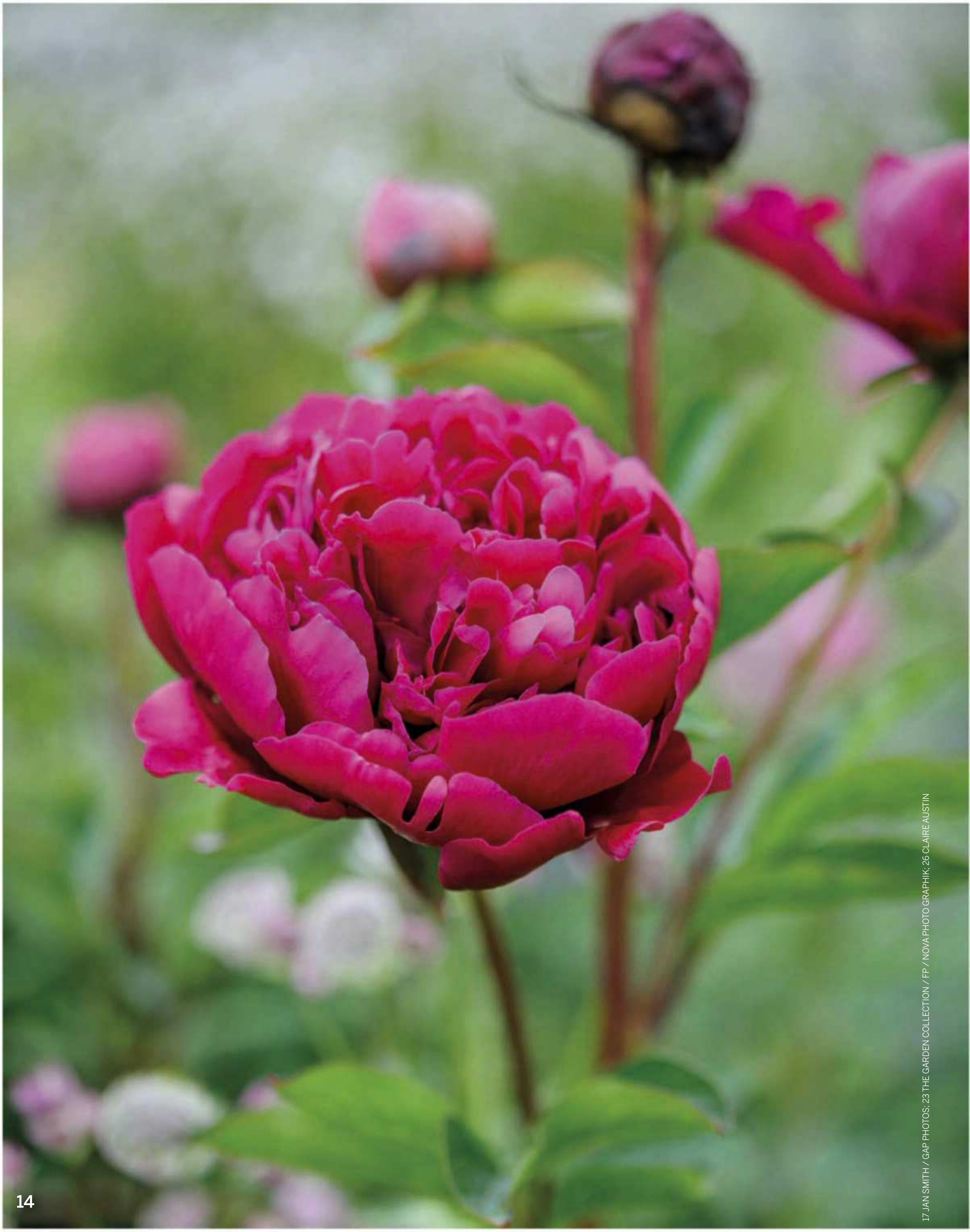
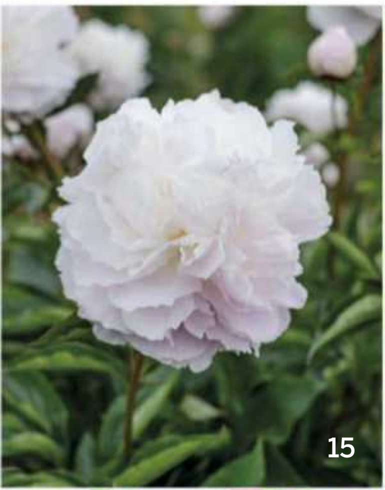
6 CHRISTINA BRAND / GAP PHOTOS; 7 CLAIRE AUSTIN



17 JAN SMITH / GAP PHOTOS; 23 THE GARDEN COLLECTION / FP / NOVA PHOTO GRAPHIK; 26 CLAIRE AUSTIN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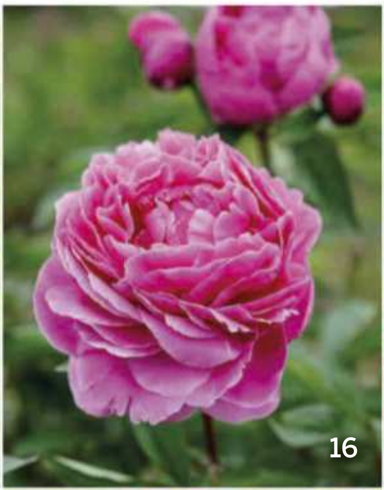
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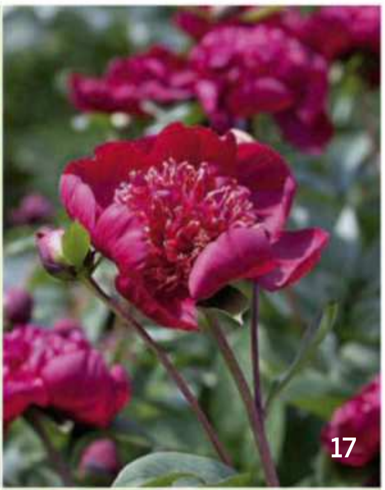
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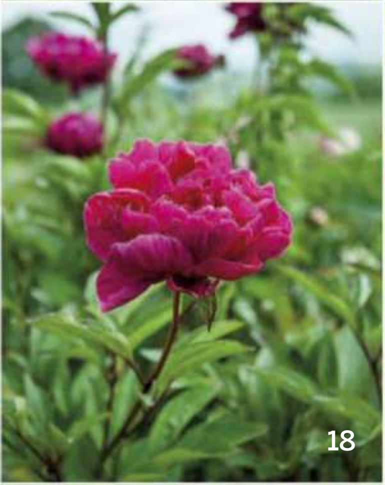
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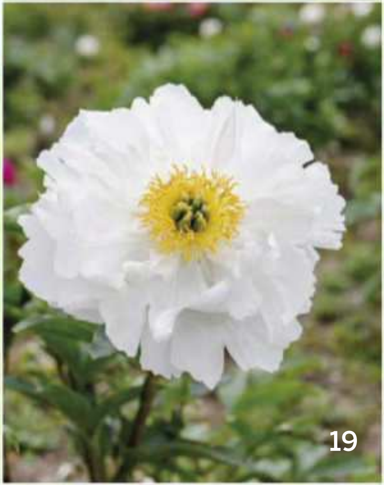
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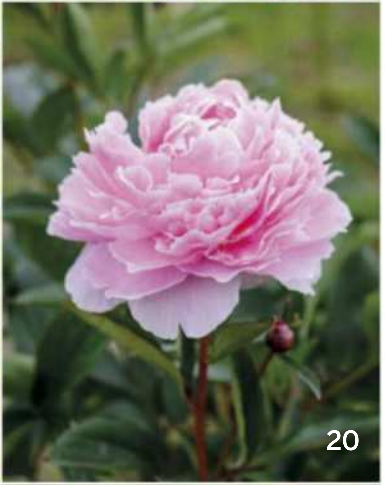
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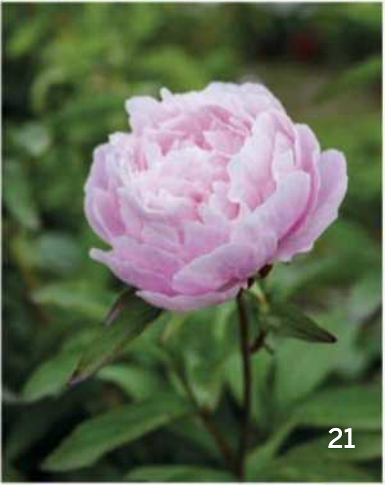
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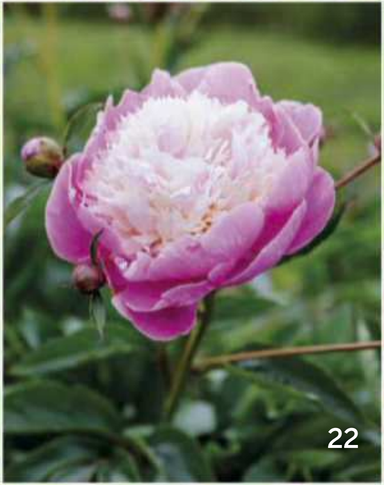
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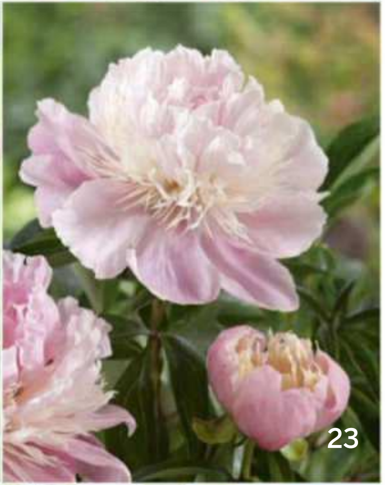
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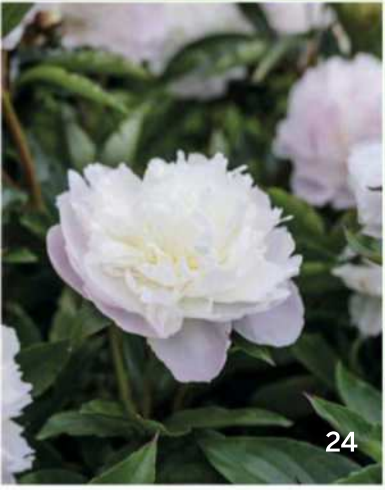
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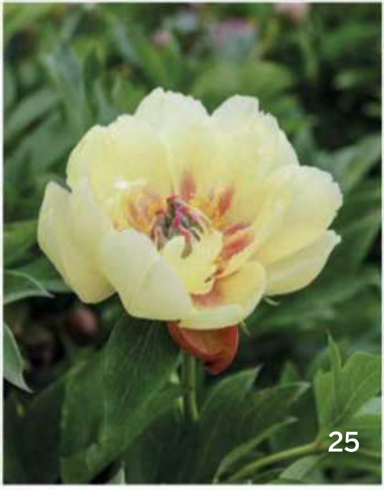
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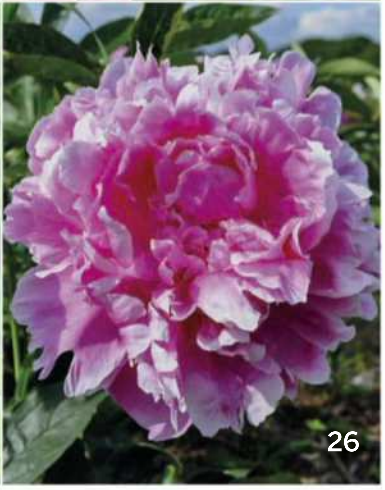
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14 *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Kansas'
A late-flowering cultivar with fabulous double flowers that are a clear, rich pink-red. Excellent for cutting. 1.2m.

15 *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Nancy Nicholls'
The big, fluffy, white flowers with a blush pink tinge are lightly scented. One of the best late-flowering cultivars. 90cm.

16 *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Monsieur Jules Elie'
Its large, double-domed, rose-pink flowers tend to flop but it is worth growing for its heady rose-like scent. Mid season. 90cm.

17 *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Nippon Beauty'
Deep-red, almost garnet-coloured, petals form a cup around large central ribbons, which are charmingly lined with cream. Late flowering. 90cm.

18 *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Adolphe Rousseau'
A mid-season peony with rich, cerise-red double flowers and yellow stamens. Although it has no scent it is always loaded with flowers. 95cm.

19 *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Miss America'
Semi-double peony flowers are most unusual and the glistening white flowers of this fragrant cultivar are particularly special. Early to mid-season. 90cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

20 *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Sarah Bernhardt'
One of Claire's favourites, this scented double has pure-pink flowers that are tinted with silver around the edges. Its long stems make this late-season peony a classic flower for cutting. 1m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

21 *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Myrtle Gentry'
Another of Claire's favourites; the large blush-pink, double flowers, fade to white with age and it has an excellent shape and scent. A mid-season bloom, it is long lasting in a vase. 90cm.

22 *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Bowl of Beauty'
This deservedly popular Japanese cultivar boasts bright-pink guard petals and ribbon-like, pale-lemon petaloids. Free flowering and slightly scented. Mid season. 80cm. AGM. RHS H6.

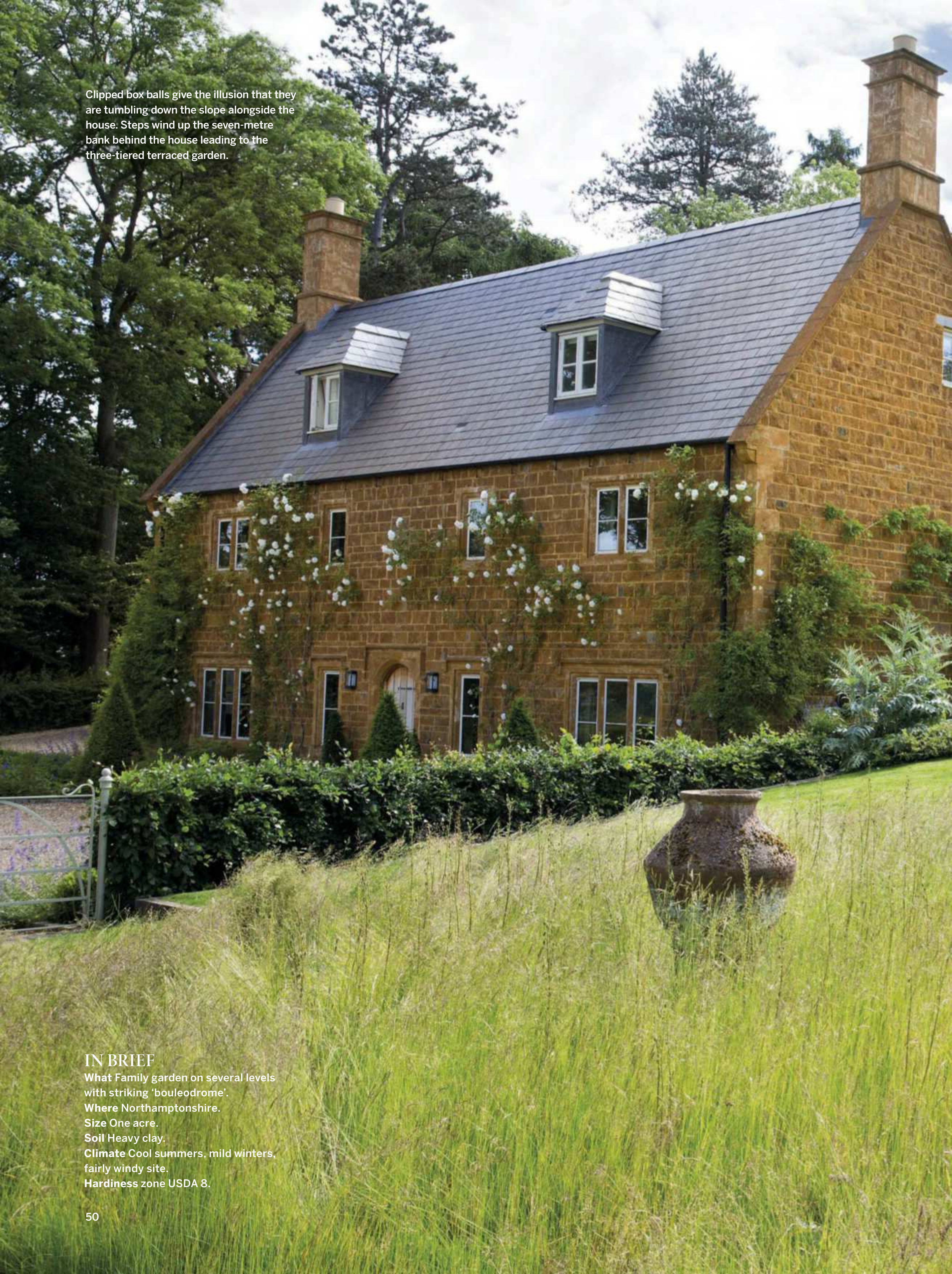
23 *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Sweet Sixteen'
A lovely peony. The delightful, lightly scented, very double, ball-shaped flowers are a delicate shade of blush pink. Mid-season. 70cm.

24 *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Shirley Temple'
Claire's mother planted this lightly scented cultivar in a shady spot 20 years ago, and it produces more than 50 flowers a year. Mid-season. 85cm. RHS H6.

25 *Paeonia* 'Prairie Charm'
The gorgeous, semi-double, yellow flower opens into a deep cup revealing raspberry flares at the base of each petal. Autumn foliage is burnished pewter. 90cm.

26 *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Pink Parfait'
This late-season peony is initially dome-shaped; its big, scented flowers open into deep, shaggy, rose-pink blooms before flattening out into what looks like a crown. 83cm. RHS H6.

- Most of the peonies featured are available as bare-root plants from Claire Austin Hardy Perennials from October to March. **claireaustin-hardyplants.co.uk**



Clipped box balls give the illusion that they are tumbling down the slope alongside the house. Steps wind up the seven-metre bank behind the house leading to the three-tiered terraced garden.

IN BRIEF

What Family garden on several levels with striking 'bouleodrome'.
Where Northamptonshire.
Size One acre.
Soil Heavy clay.
Climate Cool summers, mild winters, fairly windy site.
Hardiness zone USDA 8.

ONLY CONNECT

A garden carved out of the side of a steep hill in Northamptonshire allowed designer James Alexander-Sinclair to let loose his playful side

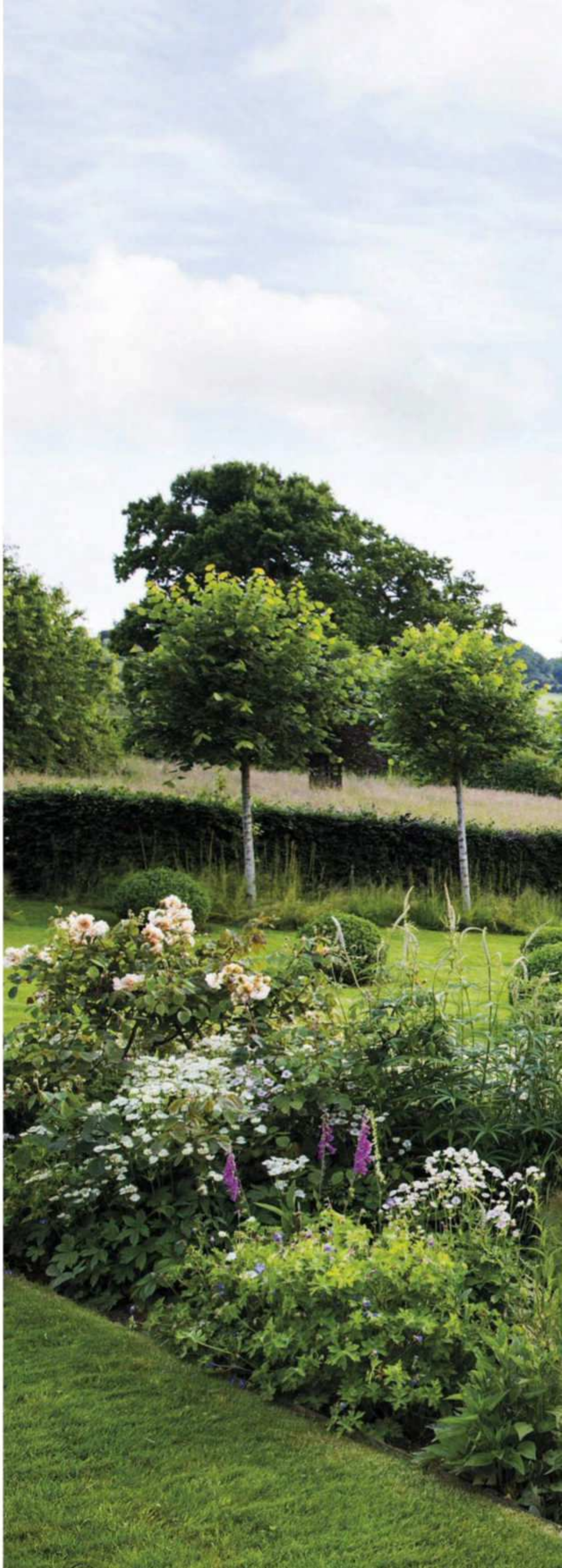
WORDS NATASHA GOODFELLOW PHOTOGRAPHS RACHEL WARNE

Garden designer James Alexander-Sinclair is known for his sense of fun. Witty, arch and urbane, he clearly enjoys the lighter side of life, and his gardens encourage us to do the same. His former garden at Blackpitts featured a 'grass snake' (a sward-covered serpentine mound); the Zoë Ball Listening Garden, his BBC Radio 2 Feel Good Garden at the 2017 RHS Chelsea Flower Show, drew crowds with its seductively throbbing tanks of water; and this Northamptonshire garden, developed over seven years with its owners, Craig and Jilly Howell-Williams, sees a delightfully named 'bouleodrome' of 30-odd box balls tumbling down the hillside as if they were marbles. The effect is disarming – one almost wants to prod the plants to see if they move. "What's the point of making a garden if it's no fun?" asks James, incredulously. "The whole purpose of garden design is to bring joy into the world."

When Craig and Jilly approached James in 2010, they had already dug out a courtyard near the house and needed help in connecting this to the hill beyond. James's solution was to build three sets of steps winding up the bank behind the house – a full seven metres above it. The first curves up from the courtyard to a slim terrace, from which a path leads off to a small woodland and lake. Another set of steps then meanders through a deep, steeply sloping border, lushly planted with roses and herbaceous plants, to an expansive grassed terrace. A rill was planned here, the dampest part of the garden, but never realised, though some simple drainage created a football pitch for the couple's young children, a solution James finds satisfying. "Gardens should be for everyone," he asserts. The third and final set of steps sashays on up through another sloping bed, this one wilder in feel. Amelanchiers, hazels and dogwoods reflect its proximity to the woods, reached through a gate beyond a small spinney of cherry trees underplanted with wild grasses.

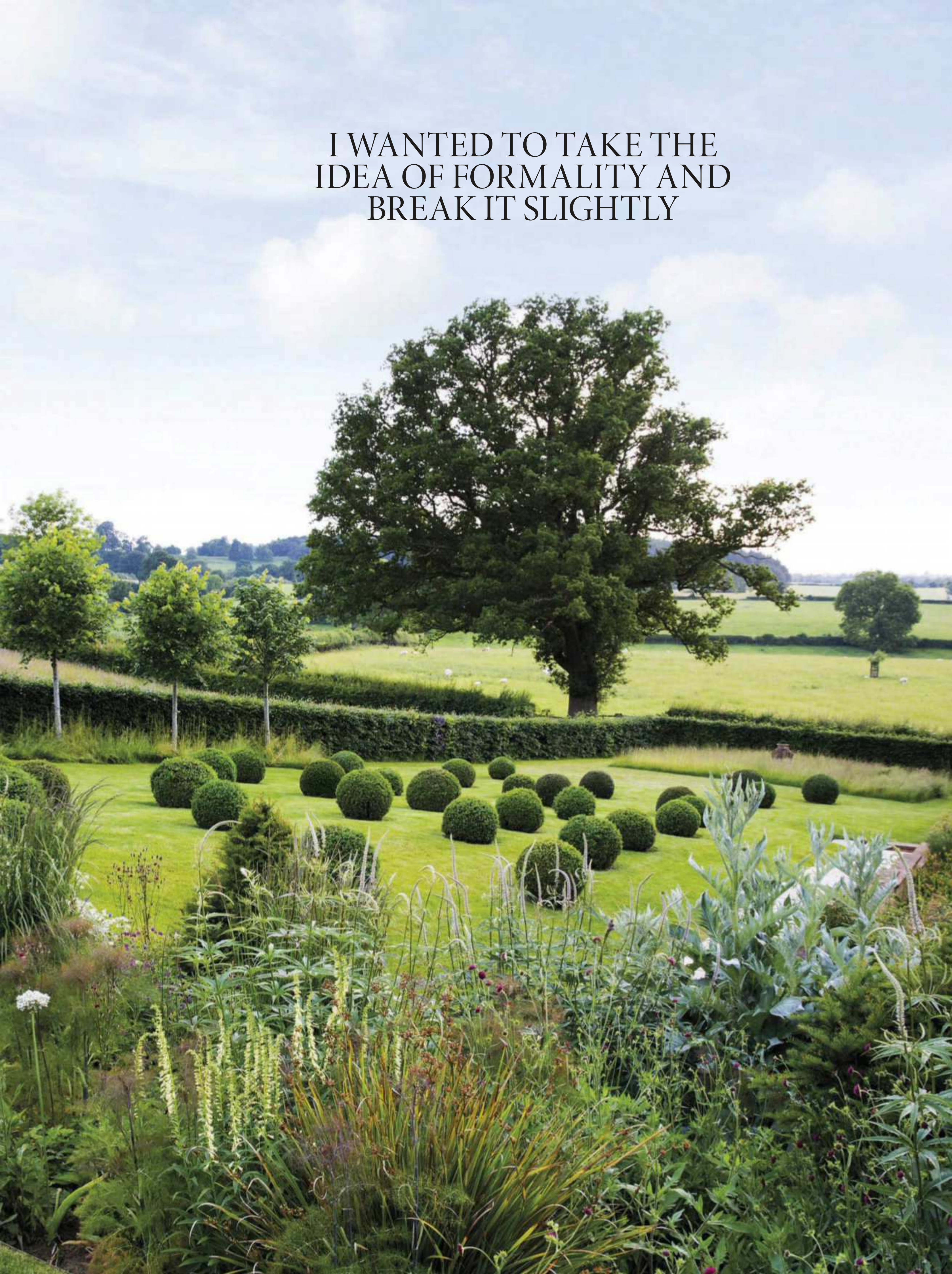
The bouleodrome, which leads the eye back down the slope to a wonderful old oak tree and the fields beyond, was installed in response to a request from Jilly. "Like all good gardens, this was a collaboration," says James. "So when Jilly said she wanted box balls, I suggested we roll them down the hill. Northamptonshire is quite wild, full of sheep and foxes, so I wanted to take the idea of formality and break it slightly."

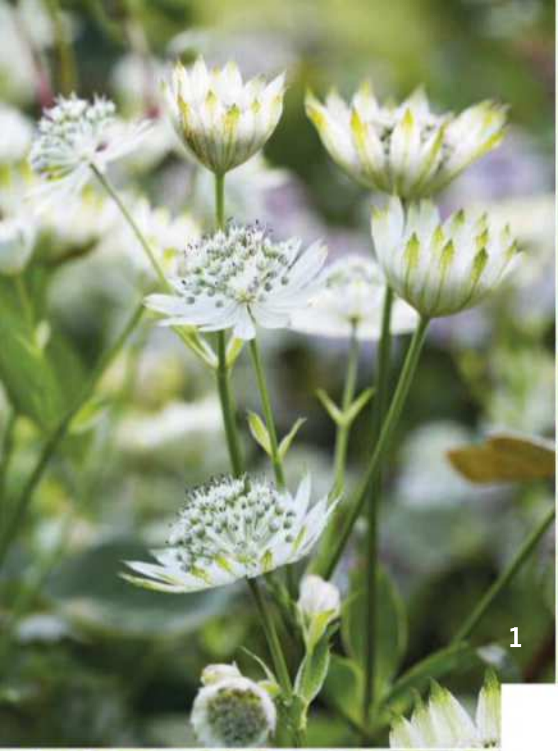
James has taken that same approach with the planting of the border nearest the house, placing topiary yew cones among an exuberant mix of foxgloves, veronicastrums, verbenas and libertias. Repeated plantings of more architectural plants, including cardoons, *Rosa* 'Penelope' and grasses – upright *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' in the border nearest the house, *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Ferner Osten' with its softer plumes further away – add to the sense of ▷



Right View down the slope from the top border. The lush planting includes *Rosa* 'Buff Beauty' (far left) and neighbouring *Astrantia major* 'Large White', giving way to the purple spikes of *Digitalis purpurea* with *Geranium* Rozanne (= 'Gerwat') below. Soft-yellow spires of *Digitalis lutea* contrast with the erect *Calmagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Karl Forerster' (centre front), while *Cynara cardunculus* adds structure (back right). Beech hedging and clipped limes enclose the bouleodrome in the background.

I WANTED TO TAKE THE IDEA OF FORMALITY AND BREAK IT SLIGHTLY

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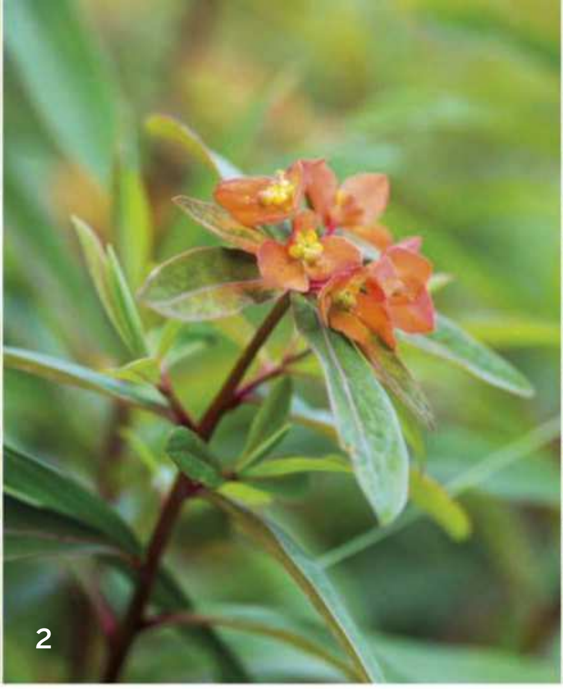
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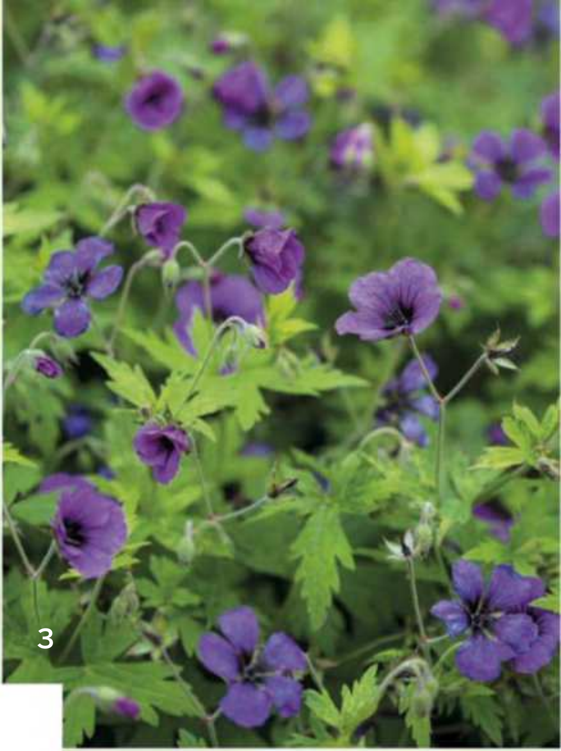
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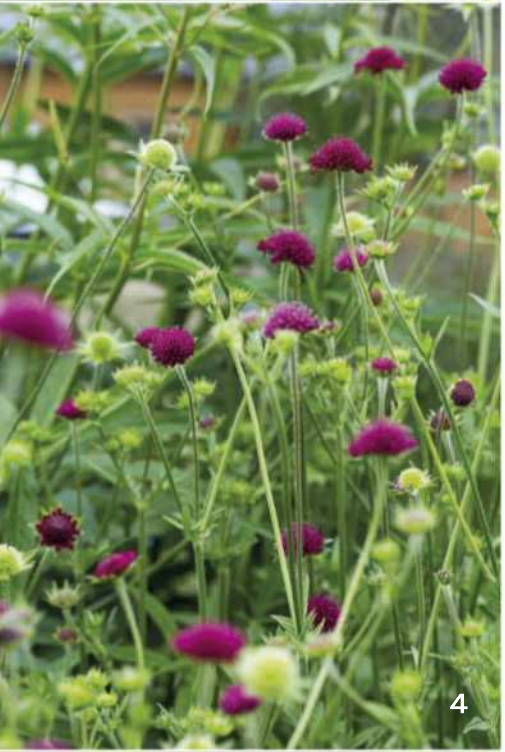
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EIGHT KEY PLANTS

1 *Astrantia* 'Superstar'
Living up to its name, this is tall, long-flowering and happy in pretty much any situation. It even looks good in death. 45cm. USDA 4a-7b[†].

2 *Euphorbia griffithii* 'Fireglow'
James seldom uses this because it tends to run away, but it flowers early and is good for a damp corner, giving a nice pop of orange to this garden just as *Cornus* 'Midwinter Fire' starts to look less exciting. 1m. RHS H7.

3 *Geranium* 'Ann Folkard'
Good for climbing over and crawling through things. Works well with peonies and ornamental poppies, which look dreadful when they go over. 60cm. AGM[*]. RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.

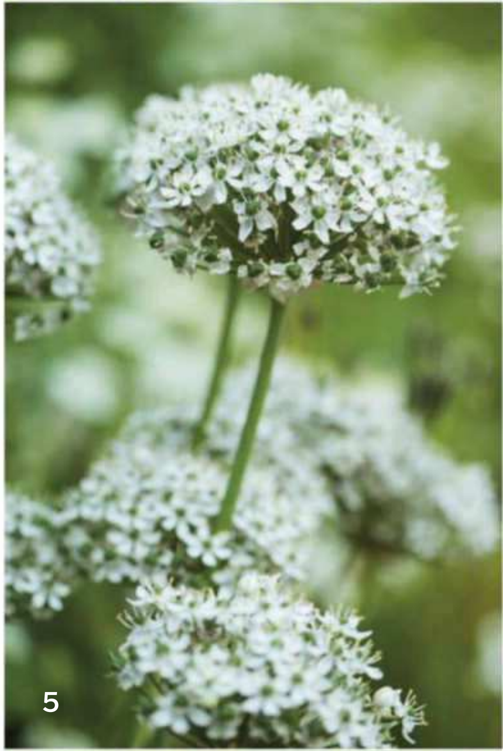
4 *Knautia macedonica*
Good colour, good for bees and good with grasses. Can be prone to mildew, but cutting it back will give it a second burst of flowering. 80cm. RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.

5 *Allium nigrum*
A mid-sized allium with a frog-green centre to its flowers. Not too heavy, the flowers form a flattened dome rather than a globe. 75cm. RHS H5.

6 *Rosa* 'Penelope'
A beautiful musk rose with a medium-strong fragrance. Will repeat flower if you deadhead, or give hips if you don't. 1m. AGM. RHS H5.

7 *Eschscholzia californica*
Flowers all summer long, pushing off its rather wonderful flower cases as the petals emerge. In most gardens this will self-seed wherever it is happy. 30cm. RHS H3, USDA 6a-10b.

8 *Geum* 'Mrs J Bradshaw'
James is fond of all geums, particularly this one, even though it's not as grand as 'Lady Stratheden' or 'Prinses Juliana'. Goes well with *Stipa tenuissima*. 60cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 5a-7b.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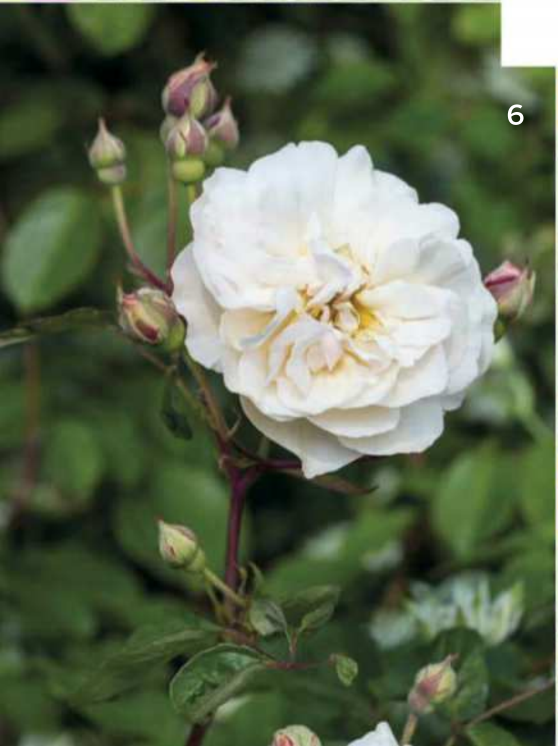
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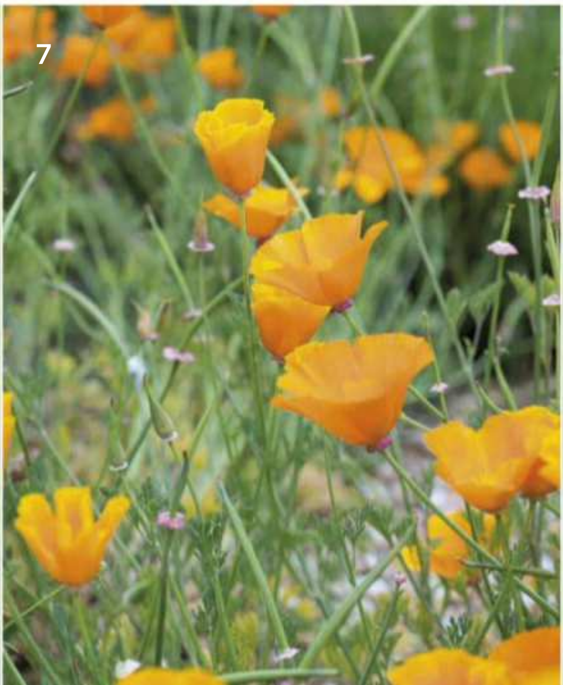
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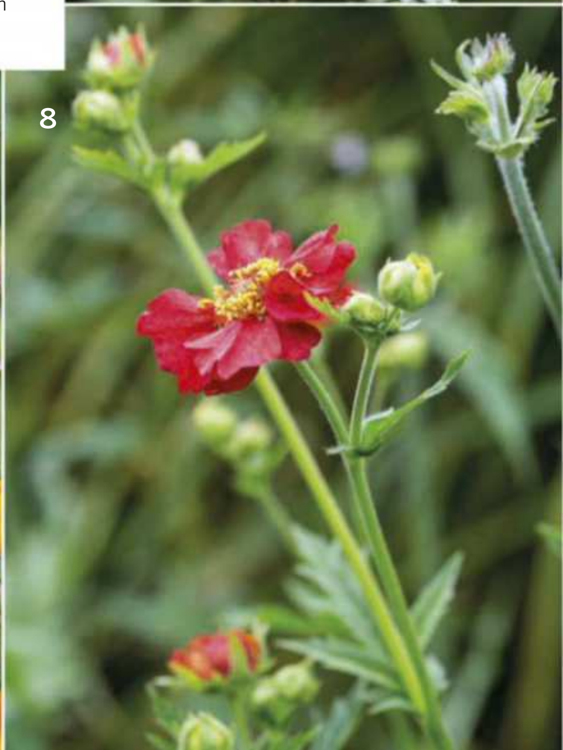
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The deep, steeply sloping top border is in the shadier part of the garden, but still bursts with colour. Evergreens take a back seat to deciduous shrubs and long-flowering garden stalwarts.

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*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.

Design tips for slopes

"People often consider slopes to be a problem in a garden," says James, "but try to view them as an interesting challenge instead. A flat garden is quite dull, whereas a gradient adds individuality and character." Here are his top tips to consider:

- **Terracing** – cutting into a hill to make flat areas that you can join by steps is the most common solution to disguise a slope, though planting also works well. You can get away with quite an angle, around 45 degrees, without the soil falling down to the bottom.
- **If you're going to have just grass on a slope,** make sure it's not too steep. Either you'll never get the mower up the hill, or it will take you down it at high speed.
- **Remember that water flows downhill** so you'll need to install drainage to avoid having a big puddle. Depending on your soil, this could involve French or gravel drains, or, on heavy clay, pipes to take the water off to a nearby ditch or drain.
- **This same principle means that you'll need to vary your planting on the slope.** Plants at the top will receive less water than those at the bottom, so plant accordingly.
- **Fast-growing groundcover will help prevent soil erosion.** Vincas, persicarias and asarum all work well in this respect.

▷ steadiness, as do a beech hedge enclosing the bouleodrome, and an elegant line of clipped limes running down its length.

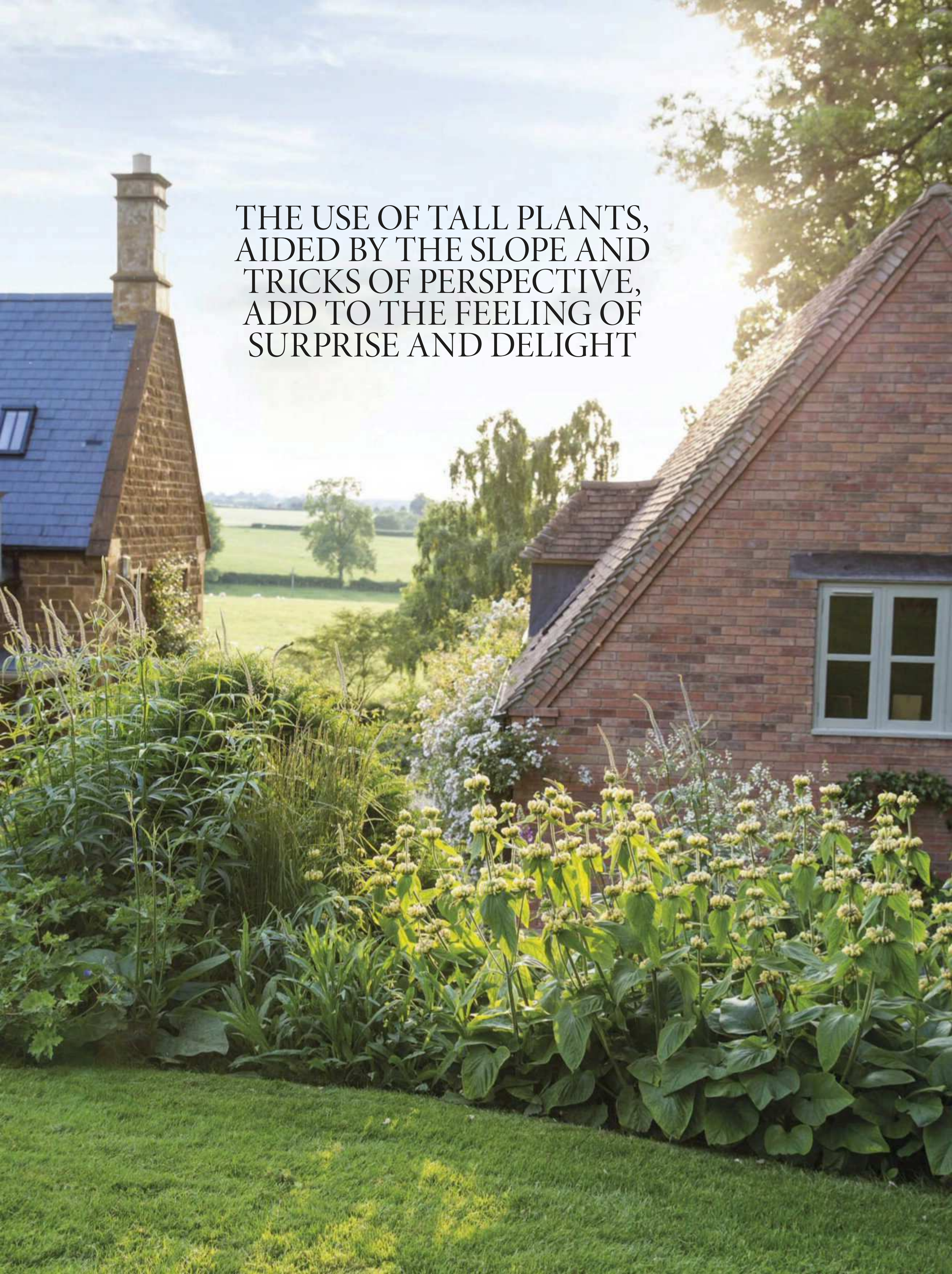
While James clearly considers winter structure in his plantings, he's careful not to include an excess of evergreens. "Too many can make a garden dull in summertime," he says. "You're not in the garden much in winter; but you are in summer, so that's when I want it to look vibrant and full of life and fizz."

This garden certainly achieves that. In June and early July, when the borders are at their peak, the planting around the courtyard seems to combine with that of the bed directly above it, creating a towering wall of colour. James's use of tall plants, aided by the slope and tricks of perspective, help to conceal different parts of the house and garden, adding to the feeling of surprise and delight as you explore it. In the courtyard – and even from the upstairs windows of the house – you're barely aware of the garden beyond the first border. The wide grass terrace is so unexpected it appears to hide in plain sight and, at some points towards the back of the garden, only the roof of the house emerges from above the froth of plants. "I like this garden because you can enjoy it from so many different directions," says James. "Planting is one of the best ways to conceal a slope. It's always fun seeing a garden come together." ◻

USEFUL INFORMATION

James Alexander-Sinclair is hosting the BBC *Gardeners' World* Live Theatre at Birmingham NEC from 14-17 June, where he will be in conversation with other garden experts.
bbcgardenersworldlive.com
You can find out more about James's work at
jamesalexandersinclair.com

Right The main border, looking towards the back of the house, includes an exuberant mix of *Libertia chilensis* with its dense clusters of white flowers (far left), the upright *Veronicastrum virginicum* 'Fascination' and the Turkish sage *Phlomis russeliana*.

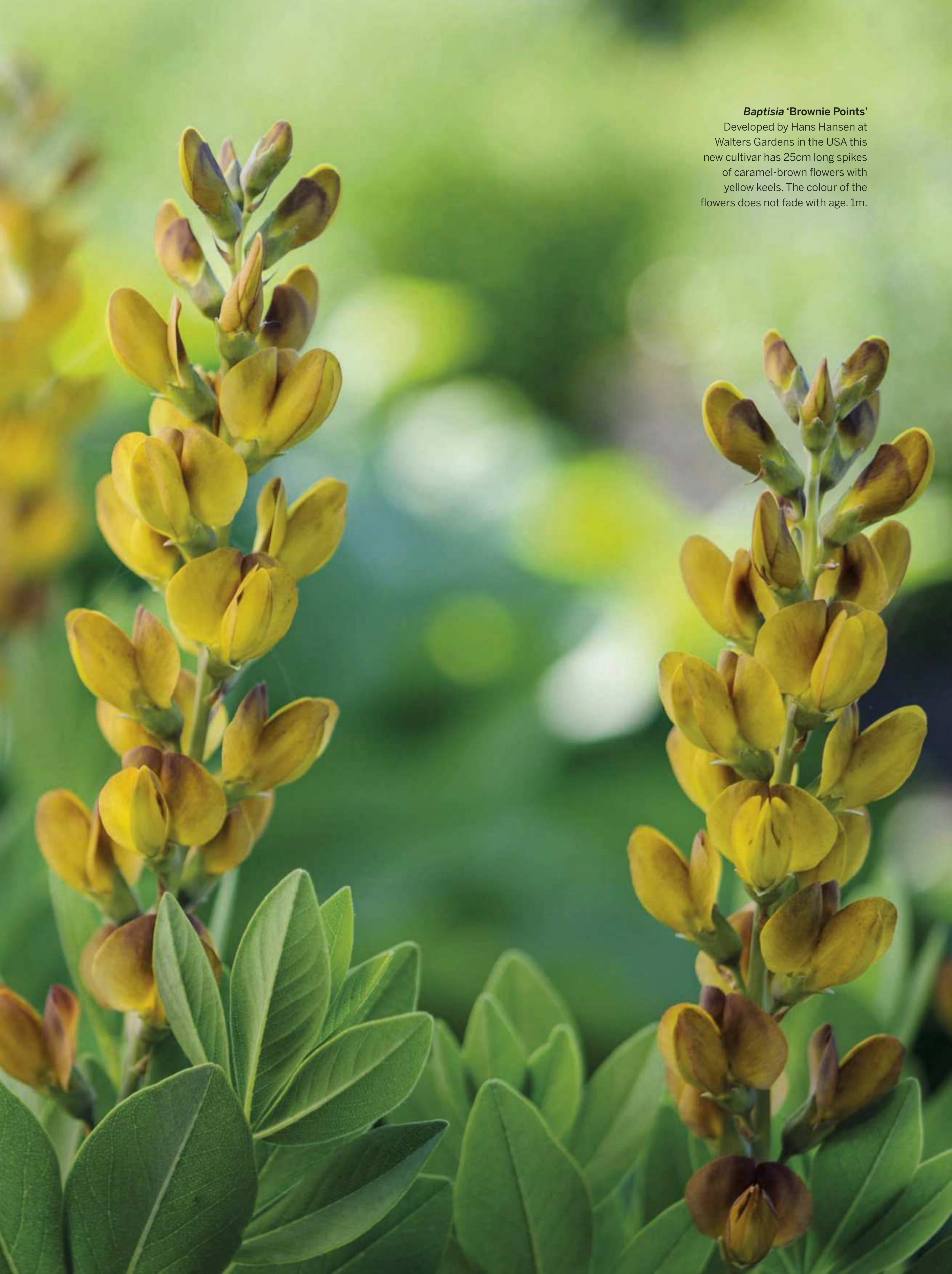


THE USE OF TALL PLANTS, AIDED BY THE SLOPE AND TRICKS OF PERSPECTIVE, ADD TO THE FEELING OF SURPRISE AND DELIGHT

BAPTISIA

Baptisias have been grown in the UK since the 19th century, but are now enjoying a much-deserved spike in popularity, thanks in part to the many new hybrids

WORDS **JOHN HOYLAND** PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM**



***Baptisia* ‘Brownie Points’**
Developed by Hans Hansen at Walters Gardens in the USA this new cultivar has 25cm long spikes of caramel-brown flowers with yellow keels. The colour of the flowers does not fade with age. 1m.

The prairies, woods and meadows of North America are a rich source of plants for British gardens. *Baptisia australis*, has been grown in gardens here since the end of the 19th century and generations of garden writers have extolled the virtues of its blue, pea-like flowers, its longevity and its adaptability. Until recently, though, there have been only a few other species of *Baptisia* grown, a couple of cultivars and no hybrids. Now, suddenly, dozens of new forms are appearing in nurseries and garden centres. And many more are on their way.

Plant breeders have been won over by the genus's ability to thrive in poor soils, its beautiful foliage and handsome flowers. It is a member of the *Fabaceae* family and so related to peas and beans. The flowers are composed of large, outer petals that are referred to as the standard, two lower petals that are known as wings and, beneath the wings, two petals that are joined together to form the keel. These are the terms growers often use when describing colour variations in the flower.

It is common for *Baptisia* to be mistaken for another member of the *Fabaceae* family, lupins, but the similarity is limited to the new shoots and the flowers. Baptisia are not susceptible to the pests and diseases that attack lupins and will live for many years longer.

There are about 17 species of *Baptisia*, all native Americans. *Baptisia australis*, which is usually one of the parents of modern hybrids, has rounded, often glaucous leaves. Growing above the foliage in late spring are spikes of indigo-blue flowers that reach about 1m tall, sometimes more on rich soils. After the flowers are over the plant has a second flush of growth and by the end of summer it has matte-black pods, like small broad beans. Rattle them and you have the sound of mini maracas.

The other main species used in *Baptisia* breeding are the yellow-flowered *Baptisia sphaerocarpa*, named for its spheroid-shaped seedpods; *Baptisia bracteata,* a prostrate form with ivory-coloured flowers; and *Baptisia alba*. Surprisingly *Baptisia alba* hasn't caught gardeners' imaginations in the same way as *Baptisia australis*. I consider it a far more elegant plant, with dusky-charcoal stems and racemes of creamy-white flowers. Young plants flower sparsely but I have one that after five years had 20 flower spikes. It flowers earlier than other species and is covered by hungry bumblebees.

The new hybrid flowers encompass blues and white as well as mahogany, brown and pink. Some breeders are focusing on bi-coloured plants where the keel of the flower is either a contrasting or a complementary colour to the rest of the flower. To meet the trend towards smaller gardens other breeders are producing shorter, more compact plants.

The new range of colours will mean more gardeners can find a place for them in their gardens. In my own I like the combination in the spring of *Baptisia australis* planted among white peonies with tall, blue alliums threaded though both plants. Later in the year the soft-green domes of the *Baptisia* are a perfect background for the sharp spires of herbaceous salvias. In a friend's orchard I was impressed by pools of a pale-blue hybrid growing in rough grass with dark-blue masts of *Camassia leichtlinii* subsp. *suksdorfii* moored around them. I have also seen *Baptisia* grown as a sort of flowering hedge, in the way lavender is sometimes used. The flowers were cut down after they have finished and for the rest of the year the *Baptisia* formed a softly undulating enclosure for taller later-flowering perennials.

Whatever your style of garden or your taste in colour, it is probable that among the new wave of baptisias there are some that will enhance your garden. I will certainly be growing more. ❑

- Author John Hoyland is a plantsman and garden writer who has gardens in, both southeast England and southwest France. His recommendations for the best baptisias can be found over the next five pages.

CHARLIE HOPKINSON

Kwekerij De Hessenhof
Kwekerij De Hessenhof, where the images for this feature were taken, is a specialist nursery in the Netherlands run by Hans Kramer (above) and his wife Miranda
hessenhof.nl

PLANT PROFILE

What A genus of about 25 species of herbaceous perennials. Also known as false indigo.

Origins North America, particularly in the American Midwest.

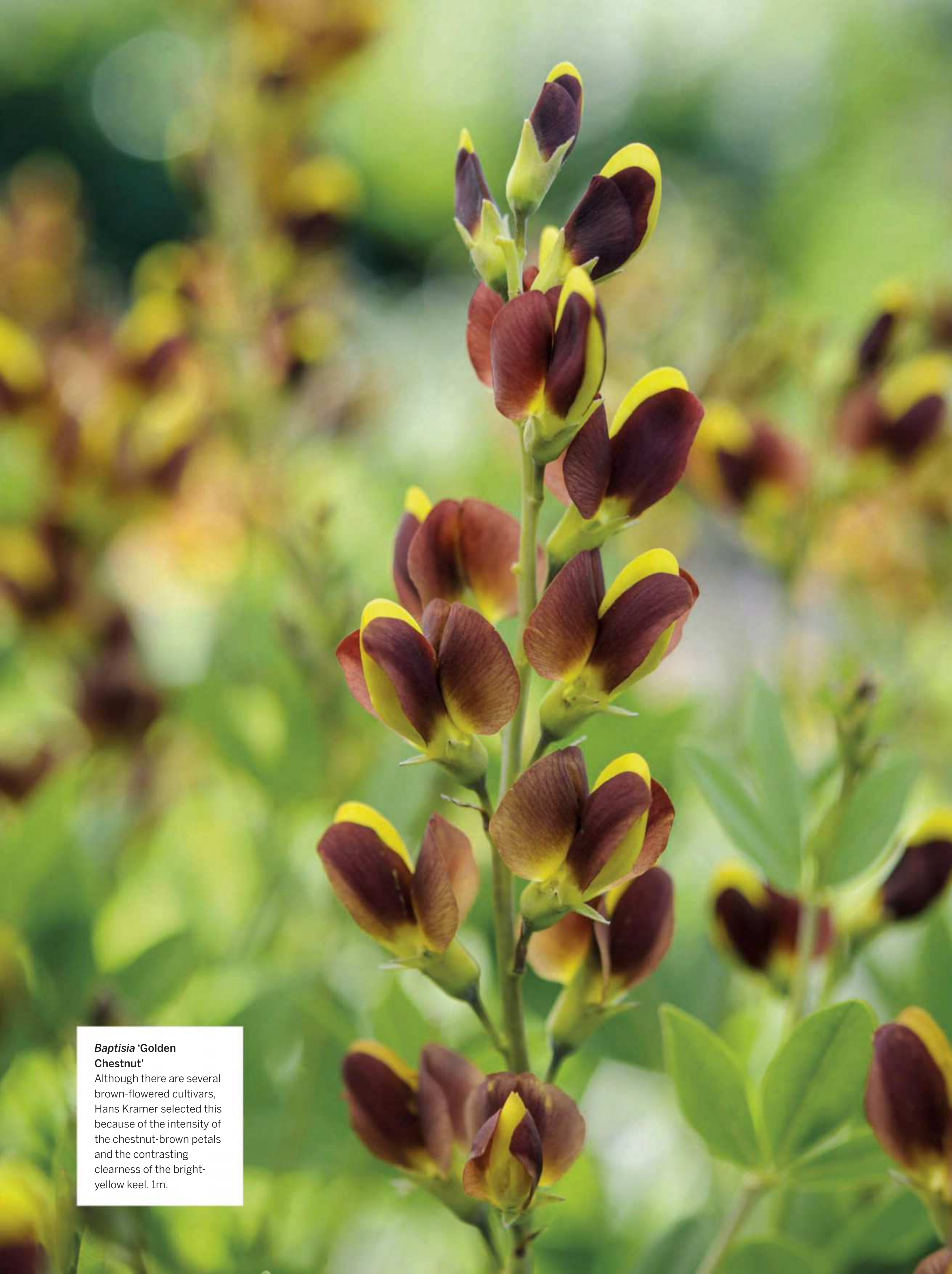
Season Spring.

Size They range in height from around 30cm to 1.2m.

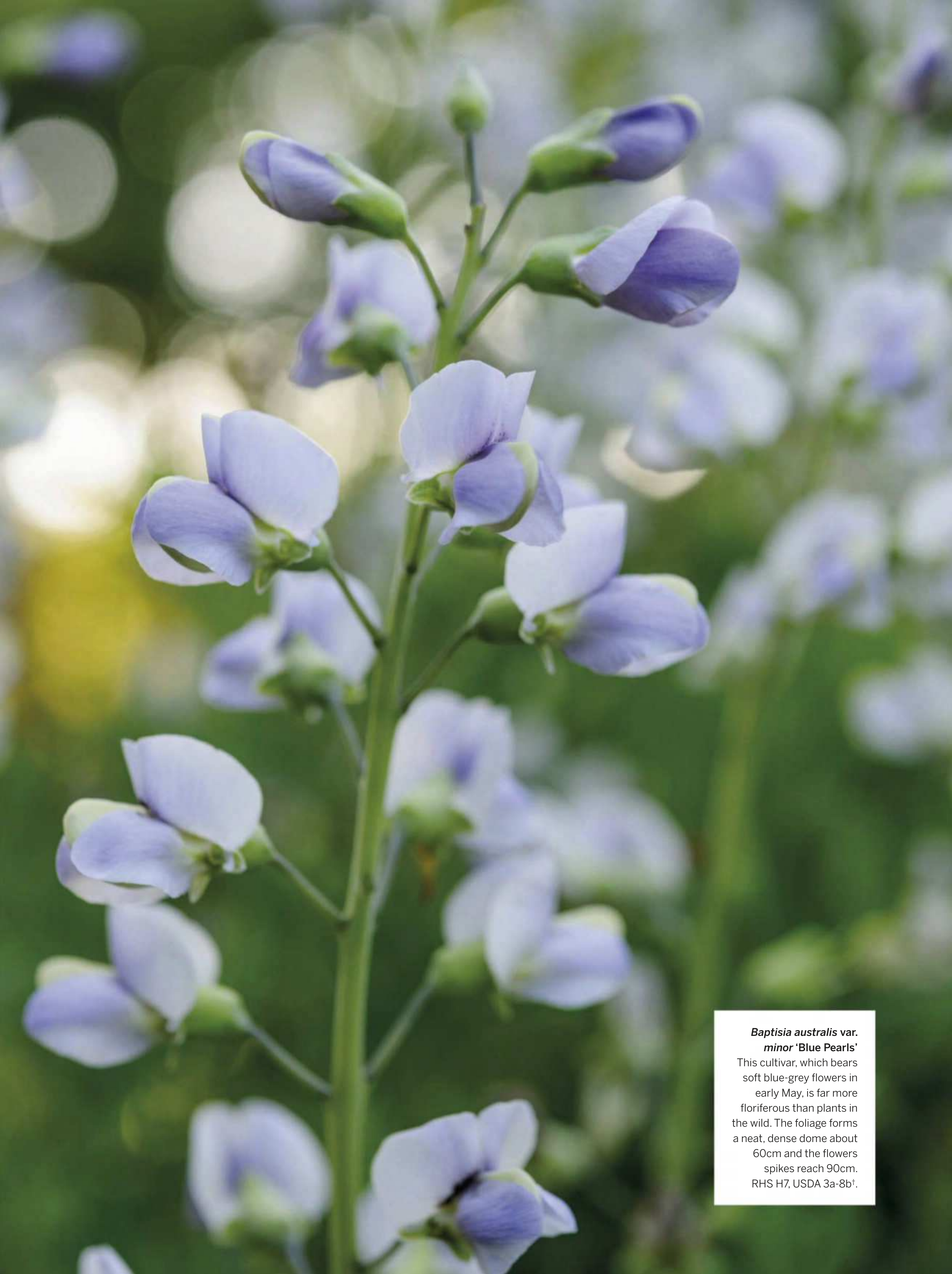
Conditions The perfect conditions are a well-drained soil in full sun.

Hardiness Baptisia are hardy throughout the UK. Most of those featured here have a RHS hardiness rating of H7 (colder than -20°C), and are suitable for gardens in USDA zones 3a to 9b.

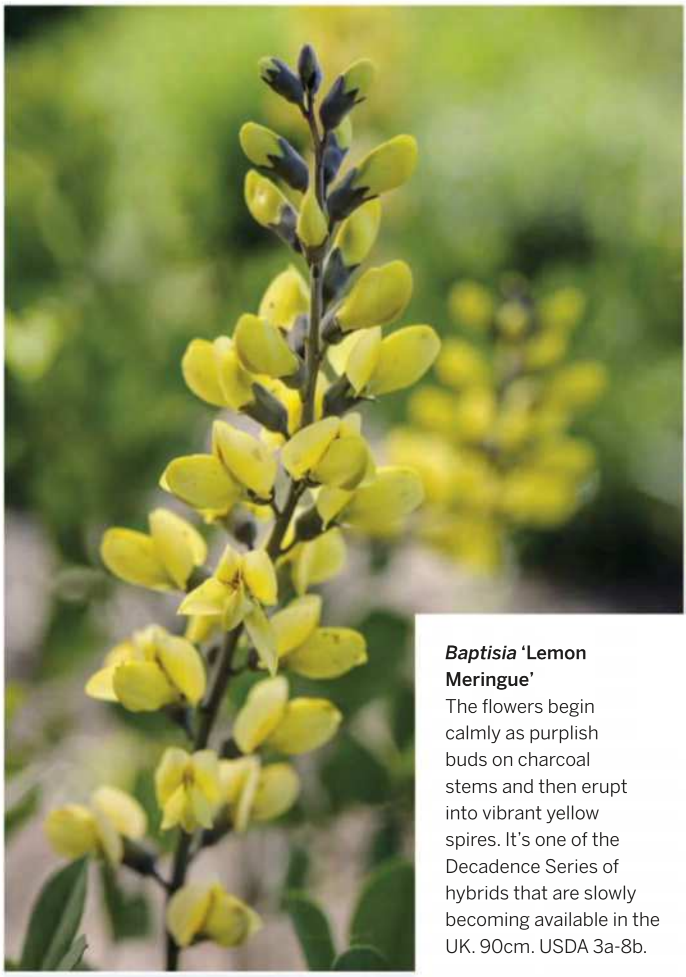
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.



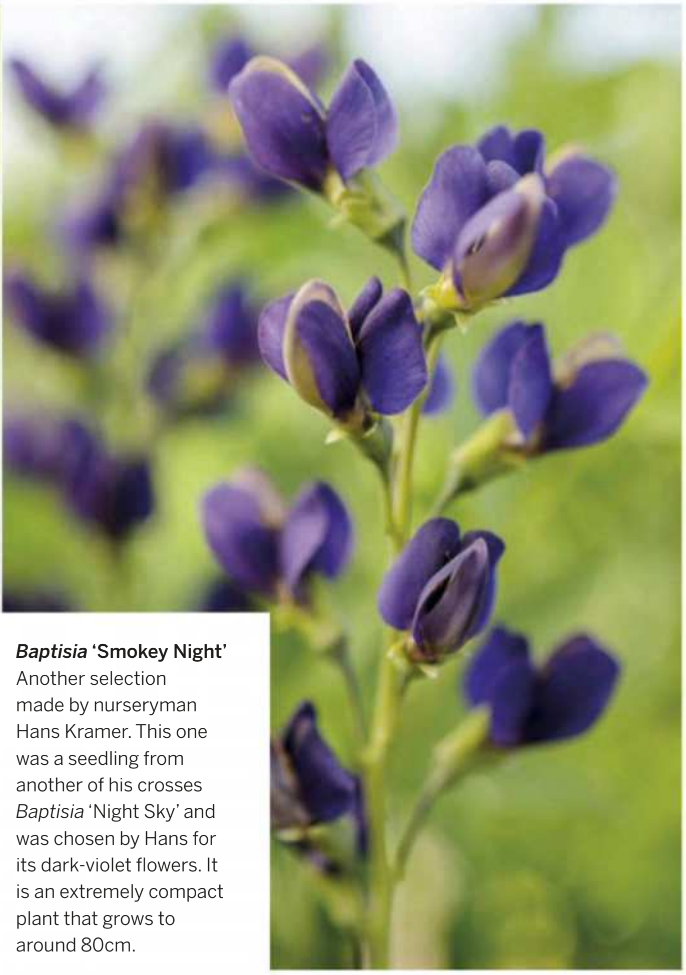
***Baptisia* 'Golden Chestnut'**
Although there are several brown-flowered cultivars, Hans Kramer selected this because of the intensity of the chestnut-brown petals and the contrasting clearness of the bright-yellow keel. 1m.



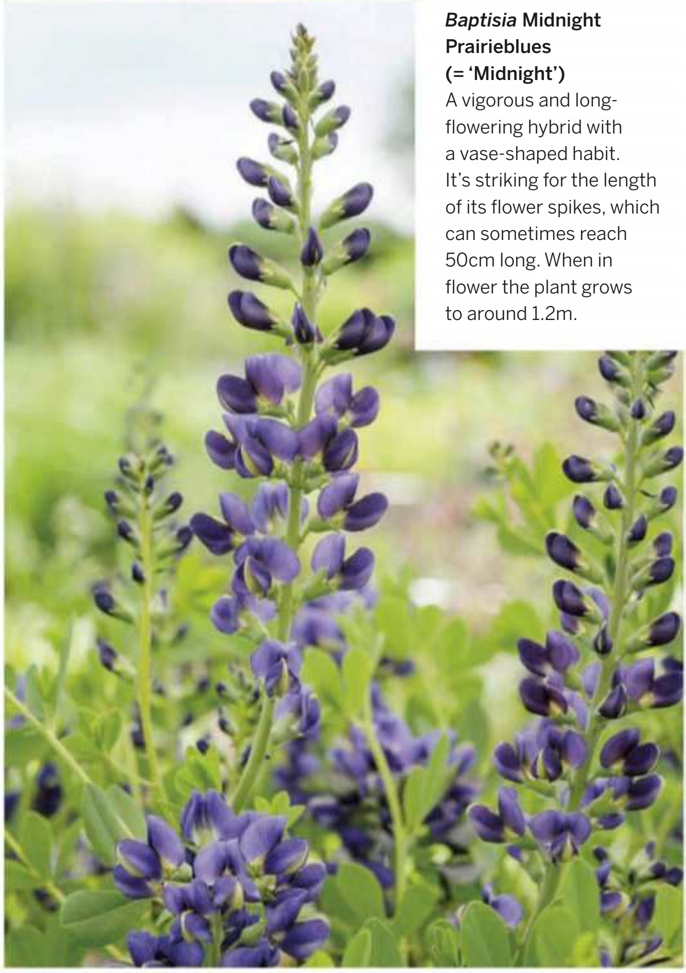
***Baptisia australis* var. *minor* 'Blue Pearls'**
This cultivar, which bears soft blue-grey flowers in early May, is far more floriferous than plants in the wild. The foliage forms a neat, dense dome about 60cm and the flowers spikes reach 90cm. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b†.



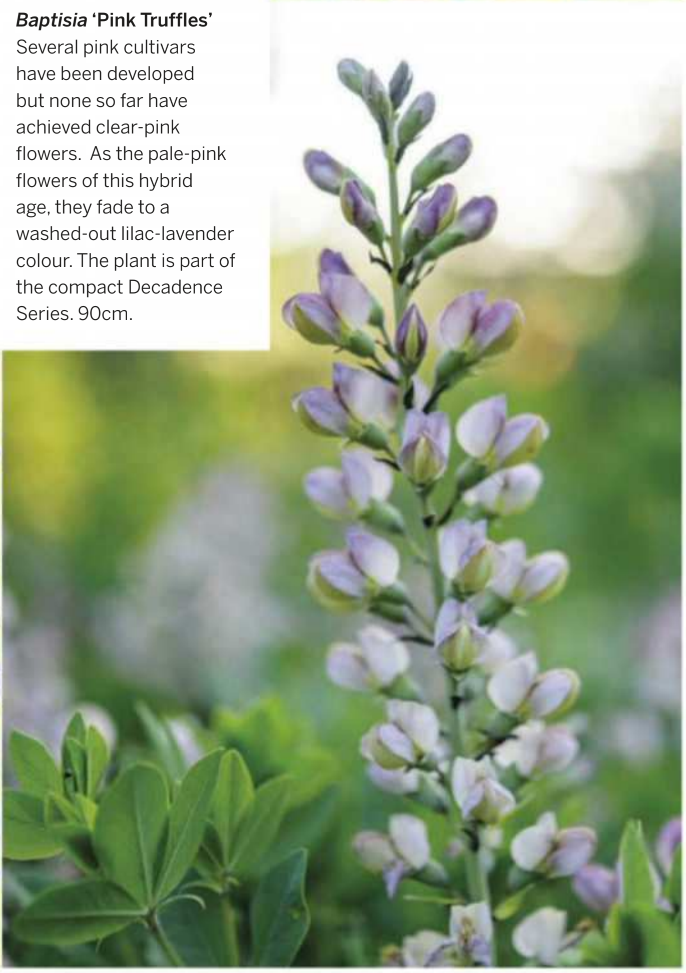
***Baptisia* 'Lemon Meringue'**
The flowers begin calmly as purplish buds on charcoal stems and then erupt into vibrant yellow spires. It's one of the Decadence Series of hybrids that are slowly becoming available in the UK. 90cm. USDA 3a-8b.



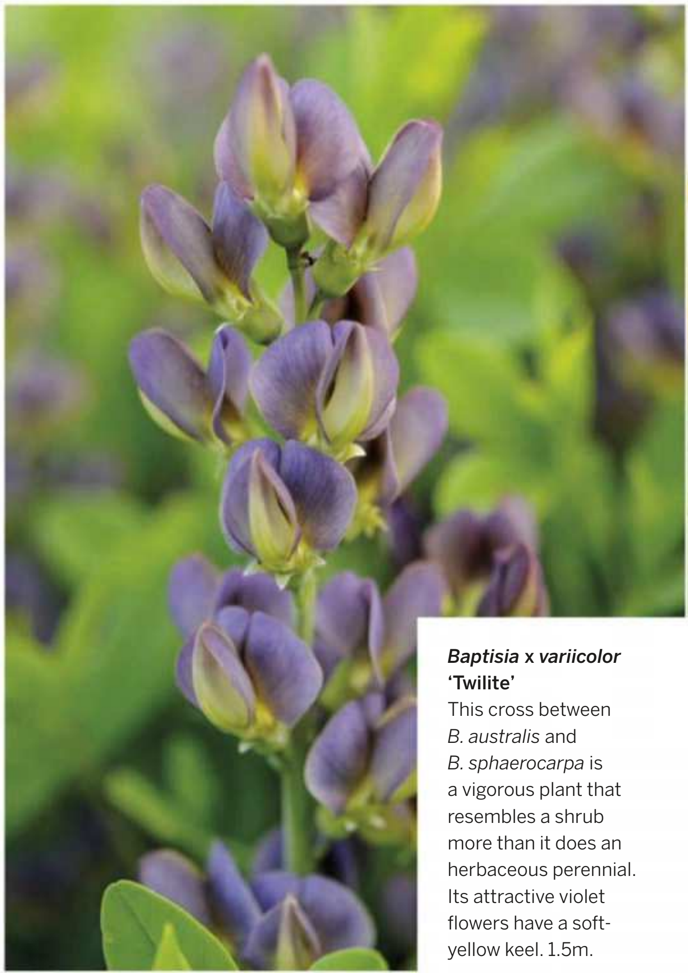
***Baptisia* 'Smokey Night'**
Another selection made by nurseryman Hans Kramer. This one was a seedling from another of his crosses *Baptisia* 'Night Sky' and was chosen by Hans for its dark-violet flowers. It is an extremely compact plant that grows to around 80cm.



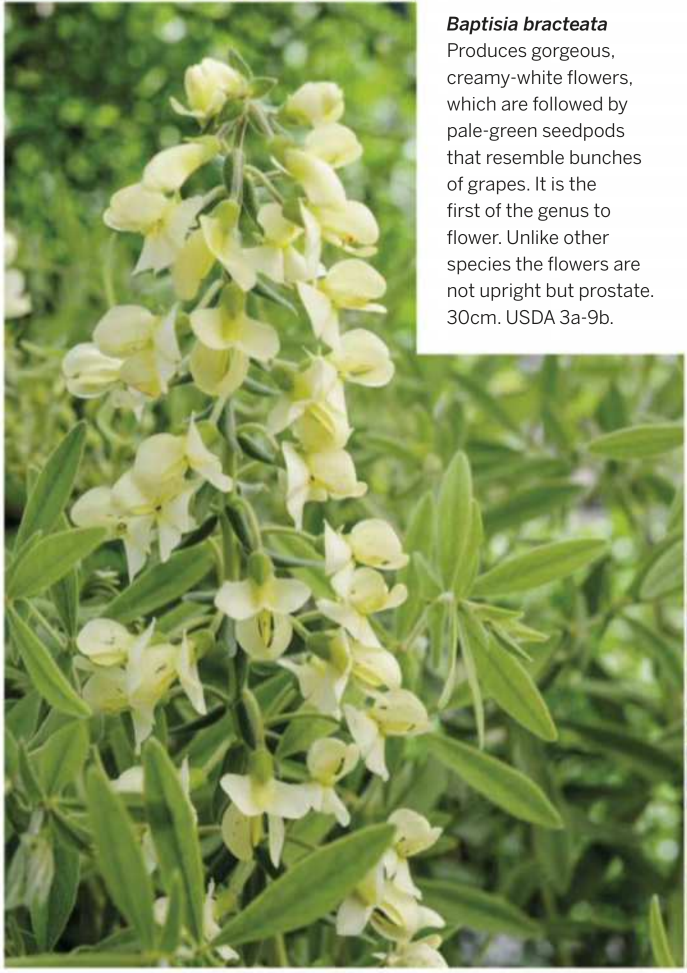
***Baptisia* Midnight Prairieblues (= 'Midnight')**
A vigorous and long-flowering hybrid with a vase-shaped habit. It's striking for the length of its flower spikes, which can sometimes reach 50cm long. When in flower the plant grows to around 1.2m.



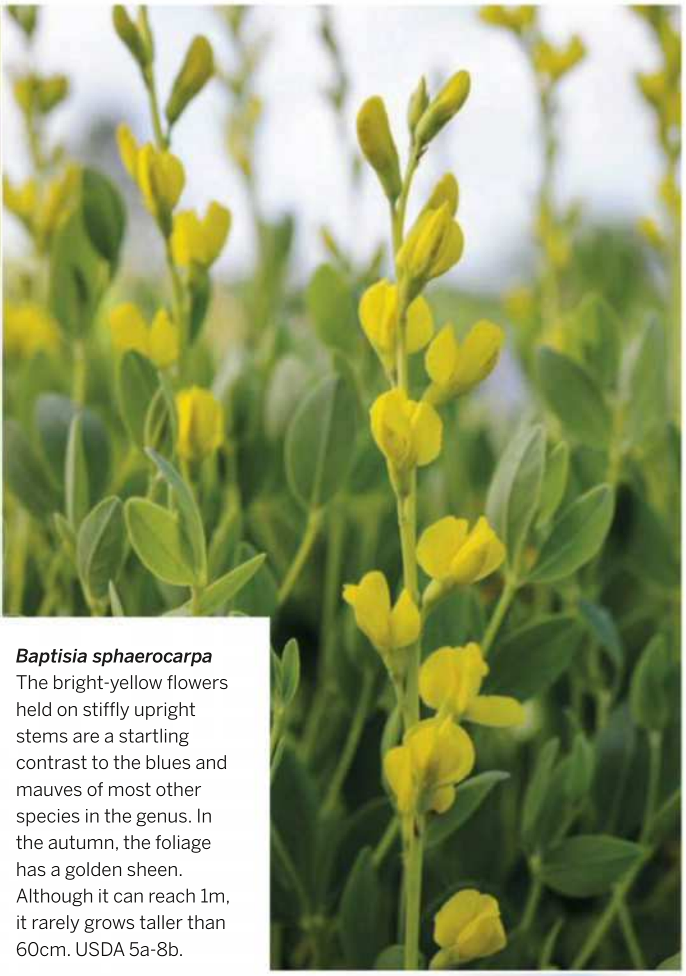
***Baptisia* 'Pink Truffles'**
Several pink cultivars have been developed but none so far have achieved clear-pink flowers. As the pale-pink flowers of this hybrid age, they fade to a washed-out lilac-lavender colour. The plant is part of the compact Decadence Series. 90cm.



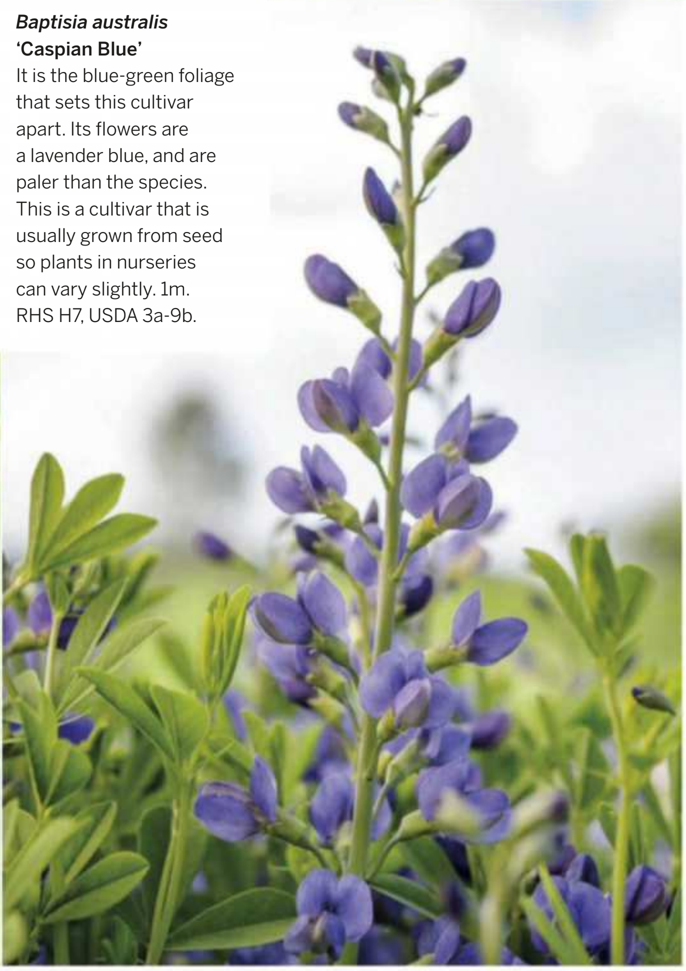
Baptisia x _variicolor_ 'Twilite'
This cross between _B. australis_ and _B. sphaerocarpa_ is a vigorous plant that resembles a shrub more than it does an herbaceous perennial. Its attractive violet flowers have a soft-yellow keel. 1.5m.



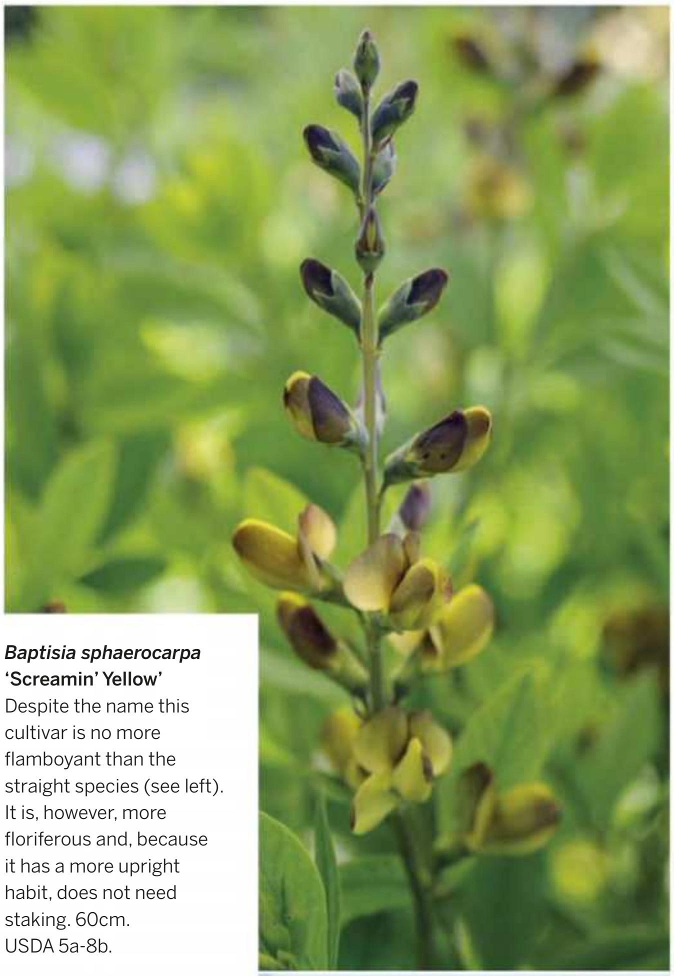
Baptisia bracteata
Produces gorgeous, creamy-white flowers, which are followed by pale-green seedpods that resemble bunches of grapes. It is the first of the genus to flower. Unlike other species the flowers are not upright but prostate. 30cm. USDA 3a-9b.



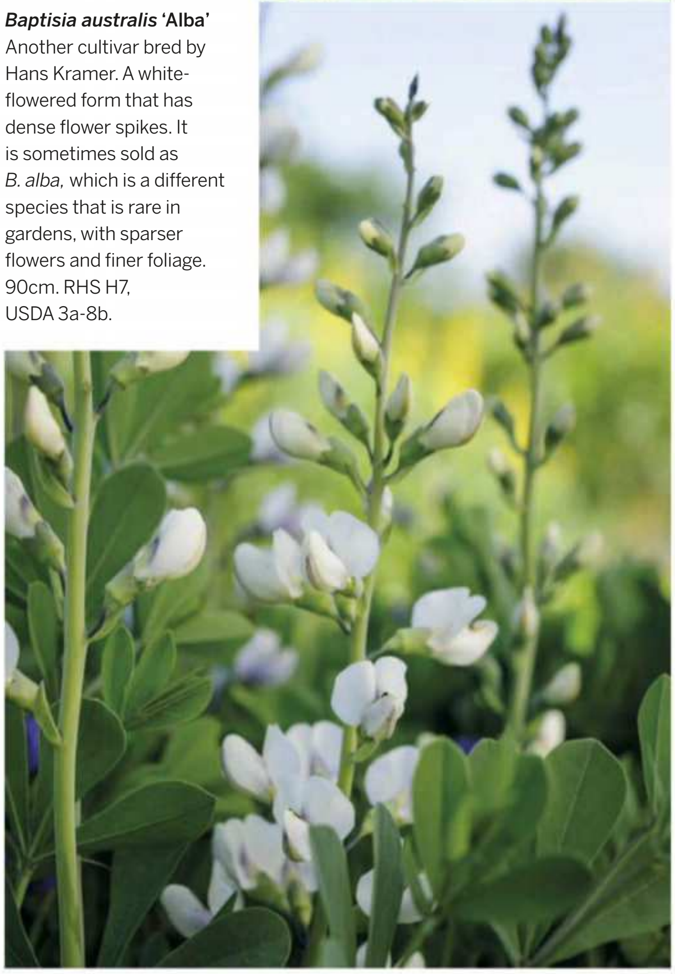
Baptisia sphaerocarpa
The bright-yellow flowers held on stiffly upright stems are a startling contrast to the blues and mauves of most other species in the genus. In the autumn, the foliage has a golden sheen. Although it can reach 1m, it rarely grows taller than 60cm. USDA 5a-8b.



Baptisia australis 'Caspian Blue'
It is the blue-green foliage that sets this cultivar apart. Its flowers are a lavender blue, and are paler than the species. This is a cultivar that is usually grown from seed so plants in nurseries can vary slightly. 1m. RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.



***Baptisia sphaerocarpa* 'Screamin' Yellow'**
Despite the name this cultivar is no more flamboyant than the straight species (see left). It is, however, more floriferous and, because it has a more upright habit, does not need staking. 60cm. USDA 5a-8b.



***Baptisia australis* 'Alba'**
Another cultivar bred by Hans Kramer. A white-flowered form that has dense flower spikes. It is sometimes sold as *B. alba,* which is a different species that is rare in gardens, with sparser flowers and finer foliage. 90cm. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

Cultivation

Baptisias are undemanding plants that are easy to grow on well-drained soil in sun or part shade. The ideal conditions are a sandy loam in full sun but they will tolerate a wide range of soil types, including clay, as long as the soil does not become waterlogged in winter. Once established, they are extremely tolerant of periods of drought. Because of their long tap-root baptisias are more difficult to move than most herbaceous perennials, so choose where you want to plant them carefully.

Plants are going to be growing in the same spot for years so before planting dig plenty of compost or well-rotted manure into the area. On heavy soils add horticultural grit to the mix. Every few years mulch around the crown of the plant with compost. Baptisias do not like to be crowded out by other plants and are at their most vigorous when air can circulate around them. Nurseryman and *Baptisia* specialist Hans Kramer recommends not planting other plants too closely around them, particularly in the first year.

Baptisia sphaerocarpa establishes more slowly than other species and the stems have a tendency to flop over after the plant has flowered. If this looks too untidy you can either support the plant with birch twigs or metal hoops early in the year as it starts growing, or cut the whole plant down to a few centimetres above the soil after it has flowered. Cutting the plant down will produce a compact dome of fresh-looking foliage but you will lose the seedpods.

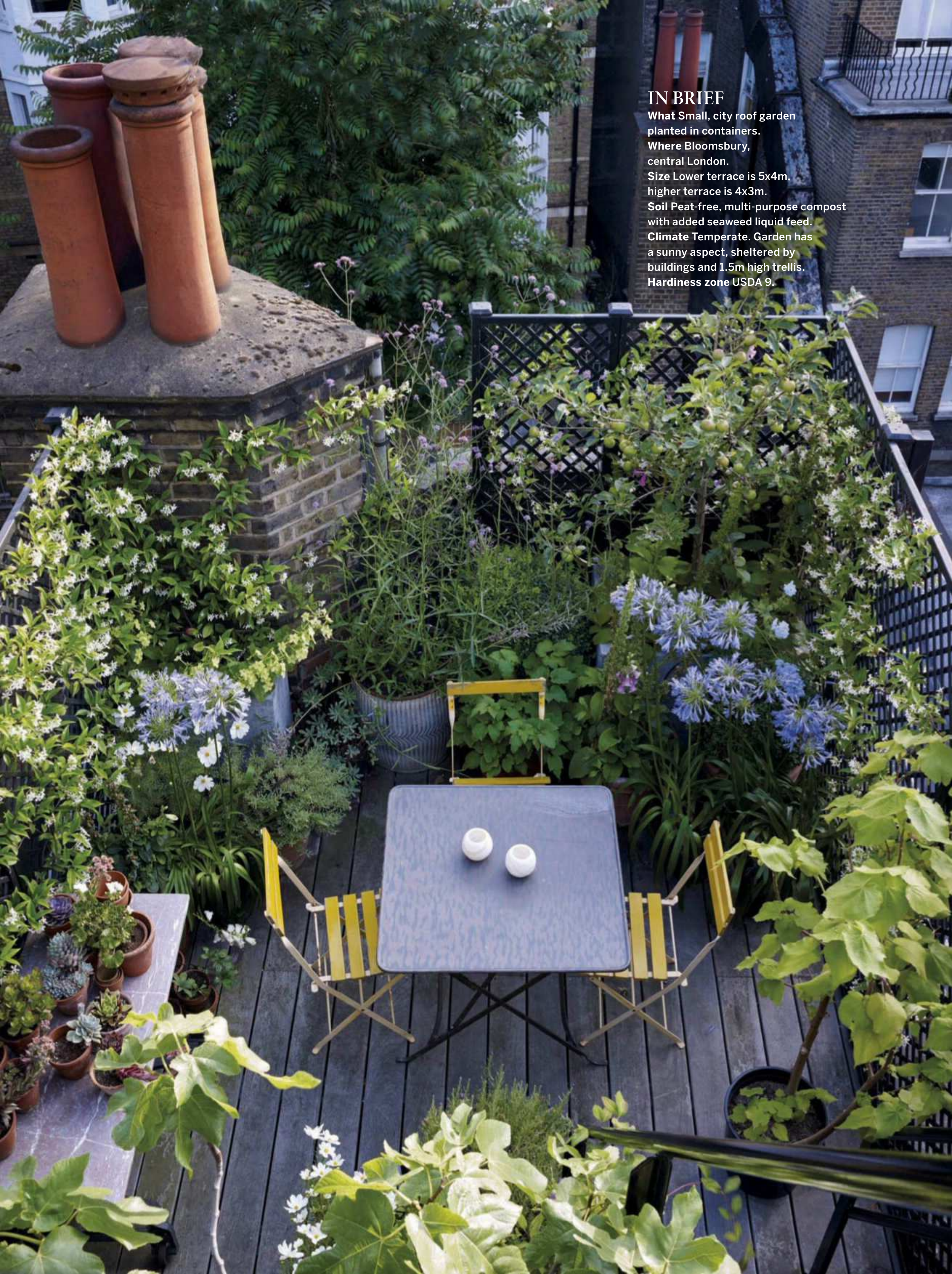
Some *Baptisia* – especially the modern hybrids – are reputed by enthusiastic marketing blurb to be unappealing to deer. However, you should be wary of such claims, a local muntjac deer enjoyed munching on ours, even when there were far tastier plants in the garden.

Dividing the main plant into smaller pieces is the usual way with herbaceous perennials to produce more plants. With *Baptisia*, the long tap root makes this difficult and the smaller pieces often do not establish. To have the best chance of success, dig up as much of the plant as possible in spring just as new growth appears. Dig deep and take as much root as possible. Cut the plant apart with a saw (or, do as I do and use an old bread knife) and replant the divisions immediately before the roots dry out.

Baptisias can be grown from seed, although only seed from species plants will produce new plants that are true to type. The seed has a hard coat, similar to that of a sweet pea seed, and will germinate more quickly if it is soaked overnight in warm water. Germination should take about a month but you will not have a flowering plant for three years. Stem cuttings should be used to increase named hybrids and cultivars but can be tricky to do even for specialist growers. To have the best chance of success, take cuttings in the spring and use a rooting powder. Hans Kramer says that about 30 per cent of cuttings do not succeed, which accounts for the relative high price of *Baptisia* compared to other herbaceous perennials.

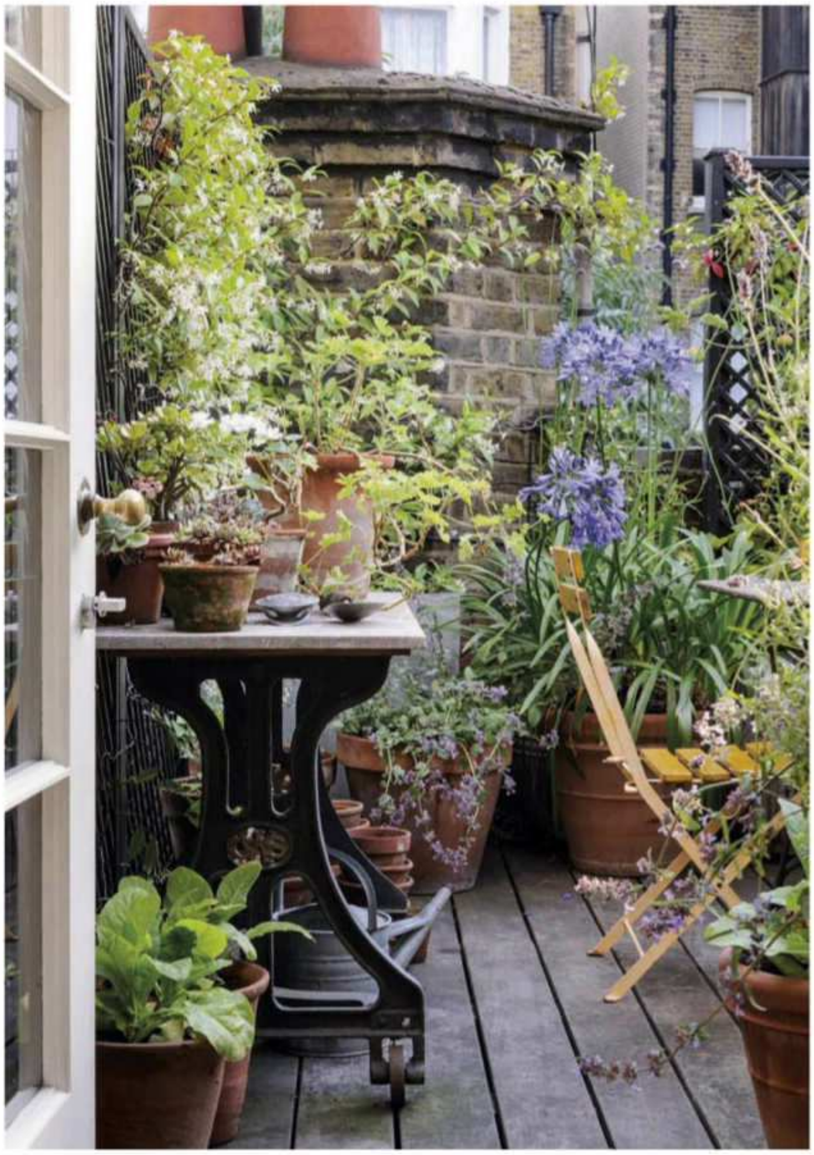
Where to see and buy

- **The Beth Chatto Gardens**
  Elmstead Market, Colchester,
  Essex CO7 7DB.
  Tel 01206 822007,
  bethchatto.co.uk
- **Hillview Hardy Plants**
  Worfield, nr Bridgnorth,
  Shropshire WV15 5NT.
  Tel 01746 716454,
  hillviewhardyplants.com
- **Kwekerij De Hessenhof**
  Hessenweg 41, 6718 TC Ede,
  the Netherlands.
  Tel +31 (0)318 617334,
  hessenhof.nl
- **Wisley Plant Centre**
  RHS Garden, Wisley, Woking,
  Surrey GU23 6QB.
  Tel 01483 211113, rhs.org.uk/
  wisleyplantcentre



IN BRIEF

What Small, city roof garden planted in containers.
Where Bloomsbury, central London.
Size Lower terrace is 5x4m, higher terrace is 4x3m.
Soil Peat-free, multi-purpose compost with added seaweed liquid feed.
Climate Temperate. Garden has a sunny aspect, sheltered by buildings and 1.5m high trellis.
Hardiness zone USDA 9.



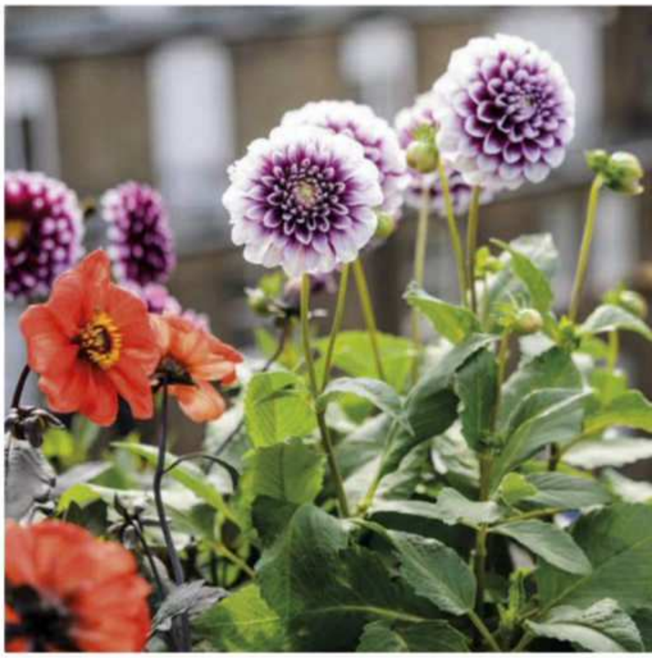
Clockwise from facing page

The lower terrace of Charlie and Ben's roof garden is incredibly private thanks to high trellis fencing covered in *Trachelospermum jasminoides*. Generously planted containers picked up from salvage yards even include a 'Scrumptious' apple tree.

A marble-topped table, picked up at auction is used to display terracotta pots of succulents and doubles as a serving table.

Charlie's beloved dahlias pop up everywhere, including these 'Bishop of Auckland' (foreground) and 'Edinburgh'.

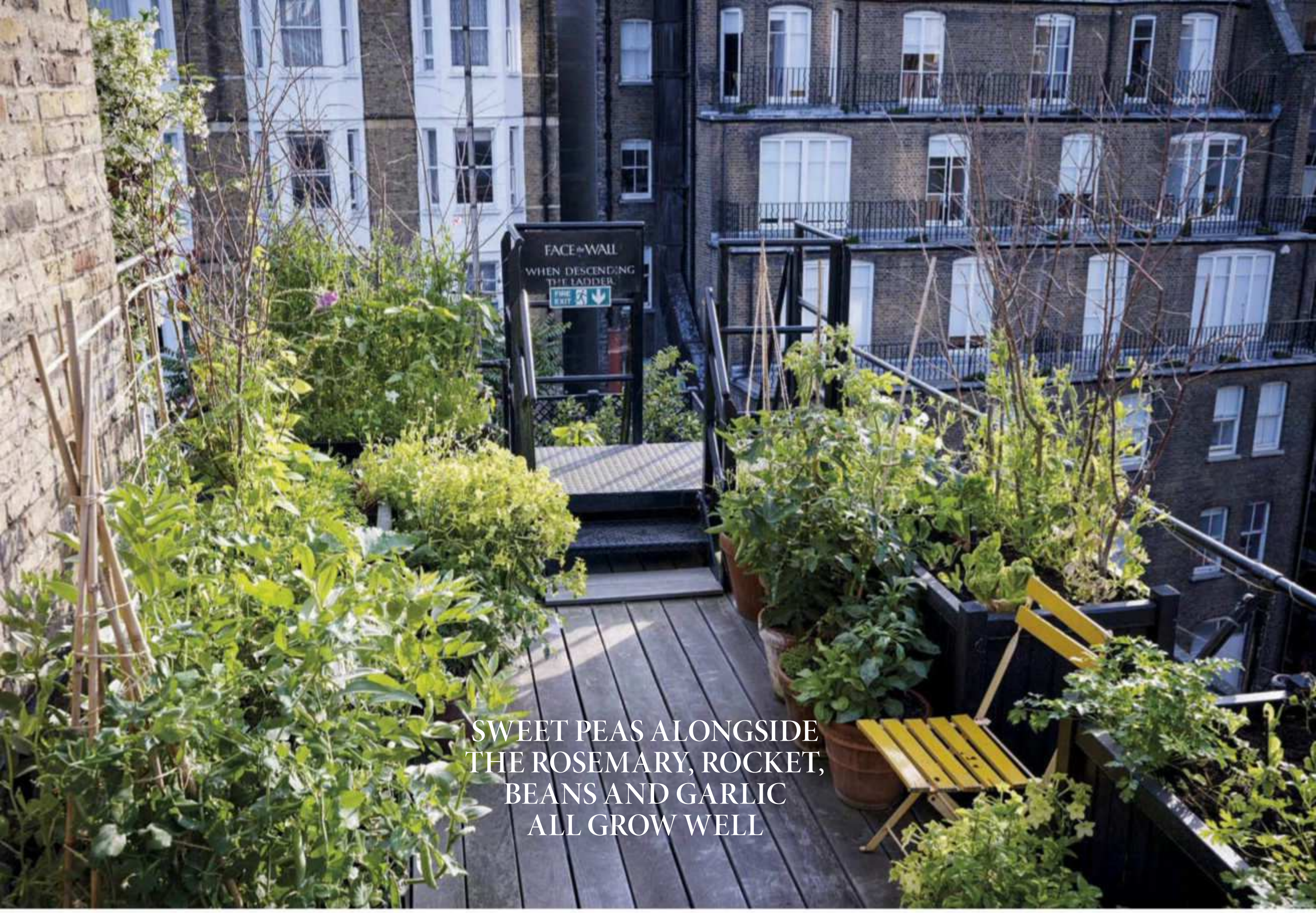
Florist Charlie McCormick (right) with his husband, interior designer Ben Pentreath.



UP ON THE ROOF

On the roof of their London town house, Ben Pentreath and Charlie McCormick have created a flower-filled roof garden using only container-grown plants

WORDS ALEX MITCHELL PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM



SWEET PEAS ALONGSIDE THE ROSEMARY, ROCKET, BEANS AND GARLIC ALL GROW WELL

You need strong legs to find the roof terrace of the florist Charlie McCormick and his husband, interior designer Ben Pentreath. Climb four flights of the handsome Bloomsbury town house – a brief pause to admire the 'flower room', blooms languishing in the butler's sink – then it's another set of stairs before a sun-drenched table comes into view.

It's not easy keeping plants in pots alive at the best of times. But when you throw in that Charlie and Ben split their time between here and a parsonage in Dorset with its own acre of garden, in which Charlie grows dahlias and tulips for sale, it's harder than most. "From August, we're either in Dorset or away." An automatic watering system seemed a good solution until it burst, prompting a note pushed through the trellis from their neighbours saying water had been gushing four metres into the air every night at 2am.

New Zealander Charlie grew up on a sheep farm, displaying cut flowers at the village shows. A stint working as 'manny' to Bridget Elworthy, half of the florists The Land Gardeners, developed his eye for generous tapestries of colour. His images of the parsonage cutting beds attract what you might call a healthy Instagram following (73.2k and rising fast). He laughs, "I think there must be a lot of people out there into dahlias and tulips."

The roof garden of this rented property has the multi-layered, spilling generosity that you'd expect from Charlie's planting eye – "I like colour," he smiles – but this 'little brother' garden to its Dorset relative has to be self-reliant to survive.

On the lower terrace, pots of neglect-happy sedums are displayed on a marble-topped sewing table the couple found at auction. Clustered around the small folding table and chairs, dolly tubs found at Sunbury Antiques Market at Kempton Park erupt with *Verbena bonariensis,* and terracotta pots brim with agapanthus, nepeta, lavender and scented pelargoniums, all thriving on infrequent watering. Foxgloves, too, have taken to rooftop life, happily self-seeding in their terracotta pots.

Reclaimed water tanks are large and deep enough to keep the roots of evergreen climber *Trachelospermum jasminoides*, hart's tongue and male ferns, a clematis Charlie can't remember the name of and 'Scrumptious' apple tree on a MM106 rootstock from drying out. "They're really good eaters. We get a better crop from it than from all the trees in the orchard in Dorset," he says. He also takes the blossom into the house for arrangements. Another equally roomy tank by the door can cram in a fig tree, *Rosa* 'Climbing Iceberg', passionflower and *Cobaea scandens*.

Up the vertiginous fire-escape ladder, it's the edibles zone, lined with seven large wooden planters made by Ben's father. Even here, Charlie can't resist cramming in colour, with sweet peas alongside the rosemary, rocket, beans and garlic, which all grow well, but the tomatoes rarely make it through the summer.

No matter. Plants that are looking good can always be brought up from Dorset in buckets to fill gaps – nicotiana, dahlias or cosmos. Meanwhile, dead leaves and the top few centimetres of old compost is bagged up and taken down to the parsonage compost heap. "I admit it's a bit of a luxury," smiles Charlie. "But it's good to keep it in the system and not have it end up in landfill." □

THE SELF-RELIANT GARDEN

Like many small urban spaces, Charlie and Ben's roof garden is planted entirely in pots and has to withstand long periods without watering. This is how they help the plants thrive:

Use large containers – particularly for trees and climbers – so the compost dries out slowly. Reclaimed water tanks around 60cm each way, and dolly tubs are deep enough to retain moisture for long periods. Water tanks are also slightly narrower at the top, which reduces evaporation.

Choose drought-tolerant plants. *Verbena bonariensis*, agapanthus, lavender, nepeta, sedums, pelargoniums, nasturtiums, foxgloves and nicotiana all cope well with the infrequent watering.

Use a good peat-free, multi-purpose compost – such as New Horizons – and, if you are going away, a 'dollop' of liquid seaweed feed on your return to give the plants a pick-me-up.

Ensure you have decent water pressure, especially if you are gardening on the roof of an old property. Charlie and Ben use a water tank topped up automatically from the mains, which is tucked under the steps to allow fast filling of watering cans.

If growing edibles, choose Mediterranean herbs (rosemary, oregano, thyme and sage), perpetual spinach, chillies, garlic and wild rocket that can cope with infrequent watering.

Don't be too wedded to anything. Be prepared to replace casualties. Encourage plants that do thrive in the conditions by allowing them to seed in situ.

Clockwise from facing page

The sunny upper terrace is crammed with terracotta pots and seven, rectangular, deep, black wooden planters made by Ben's father. Charlie fills every available space with lettuce, rocket, mesclun leaves, garlic, potatoes, herbs and beans, but can't resist adding tulips and dahlias as well as sweet peas growing up twiggy sticks and cane wigwams.

A deep, reclaimed water tank ensures the roots of *Trachelospermum jasminoides* stay cool and damp even when the couple are away for long periods.

Decking and fencing has transformed what was once a bare lead roof area into an intimate space for enjoying a morning coffee or early evening glass of wine among pots of agapanthus, foxgloves and *Verbena bonariensis.*

HORTICULTURAL WHO'S WHO

JOHN HILLIER

The fourth-generation owner of Hillier Nurseries and unassuming RHS Victoria Medal holder has made it his mission to supply useful, reliable plants that work well in the everyone's garden

WORDS **AMBRA EDWARDS** PORTRAIT **CHARLIE HOPKINSON**

There is a generation of Englishmen who, however laudable their achievements and how widely known, consider it quite unseemly to speak of them. One such is the plantsman John Hillier, born in 1935, the eldest son of the legendary Sir Harold Hillier, and clearly the inheritor of the family's plantaholic gene. The story of the Hillier empire dates back to 1864 when journeyman gardener Edwin Hillier opened a florist's shop and small nursery in Winchester. He was succeeded by his son, Edwin Lawrence, who became a noted expert on conifers, and holder of the RHS's highest award, the Victoria Medal of Honour. His son Harold was similarly honoured for his encyclopedic knowledge of woody plants. The arboretum he created, now in the care of Hampshire County Council and open to the public as the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens, remains one of the great plant collections of the temperate world, with more types of tree than either Westonbirt Arboretum or Kew Gardens. John's approach to plantsmanship was rather different from that of his father, but earned him his own Victoria Medal in 1996. Only 63 of these medals may be held at any one time; some luminary has to die before a new one can be awarded. Nevertheless, John Hillier is far too self-effacing to mention it.

FRESH OFF THE LINER FROM AMERICA, JOHN DASHED STRAIGHT UP TO CHELSEA TO GET TO WORK ON THE STAND IN THE GREAT PAVILION

The old saw about family businesses is that the first generation starts it, the second grows it, then the third blows it. Yet not only has John overseen, with his younger brother Robert, the transformation of the family firm from an elite and ultimately unviable institution catering for a dying breed of plant connoisseurs into a thriving multi-stranded business successfully adapted to a totally different world of horticulture, but he has managed to pass it on, reputation still aglow, to a fifth generation. Both his sons and two of his nephews remain involved in the business. Today the Hilliers' brand encompasses a dozen garden centres, a wholesale nursery supplying containerised plants to these and other outlets and a tree division growing the UK's widest range of trees for landscapers, local authorities and garden designers. All the trees in the Olympic Park in London came from Hilliers – as did those that adorned the Festival of Britain back in 1951.

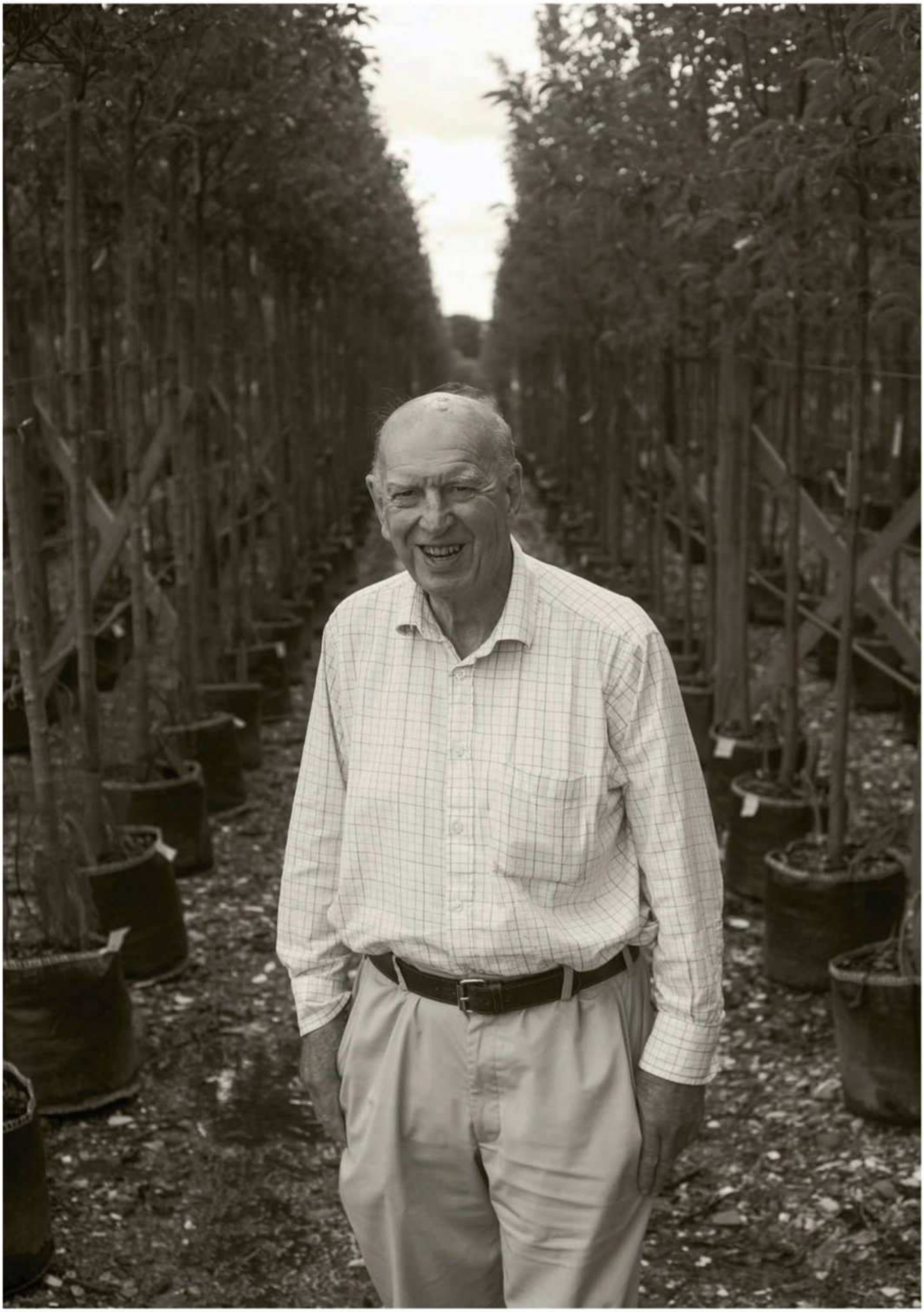
Did he ever consider any other kind of career? "I think my father said, 'That's what you've got to do', and I just got on with it." After National Service in Libya, John spent a 'gap year' working at two nurseries in the USA before coming home to start work in the family nursery at Eastleigh. In those days, the journey across the Atlantic was made by liner. His mother met him at Southampton Docks, but there was no time to celebrate his homecoming – they dashed straight up to the Chelsea Flower Show to get to work on the Hilliers' stand in the Great Pavilion. From the following year, 1959, the firm's Chelsea offering became John's responsibility, and he has worked on the stand every single year since then, taking enormous pride in Hilliers' unparalleled record of 72 consecutive gold medals.

"I did suggest we might stop when we got to 70," says John. "That's surely enough for anyone, and, moneywise, it makes no sense at all." But his staff were so dismayed that he relented, and besides, it pleases him to think that their display, unusually for Chelsea, is so very helpful to novice gardeners, with its wide range of plants, comprehensively labelled, and ideas for combining them that will actually work in real gardens.

It is here that John Hillier's contribution is so important. Since Sir Harold's death in 1985 he has collaborated with Roy Lancaster, his father's protégé and long-time curator of the arboretum, on *The Hillier Manual of Trees and Shrubs*, which started life as a nursery catalogue in 1964, but gradually morphed into the industry 'Bible'. The last edition saw them add 1,500 new entries, but while Roy's focus is on the botanical interest of plants gathered from far-flung corners of the globe, John has made it his business to concentrate on plants that will be useful to the average gardener. For four decades he has served on RHS committees, kept up with growers and invested in a team of talented hybridisers, in search of reliable new plants that earn their keep in today's smaller gardens. Many of the plants introduced on his watch have become garden stalwarts, such as *Cotinus* 'Grace' (1978), *Choisya* x *dewitteana* 'Aztec Pearl' (1982) or *Daphne bholua* 'Jacqueline Postill' (1982).

"Very few people these days ask for a plant by name," says John. "Mostly they will go into a garden centre, see a plant in bloom, and think, 'I'll have one of those', just like a buying a bunch of flowers." Rather than being snooty about their lack of knowledge, he wants to give them plants that won't disappoint. He'd say that's only sound business sense. But clearly it's more of a mission. He wants everyone to share his enthusiasm for plants. ❑

USEFUL INFORMATION
Hilliers, Jermyns Lane, Braishfield, nr Romsey, Hampshire SO51 0QA. Tel 01794 369318, hillier.co.uk. The nearby Sir Harold Hillier Gardens are open all year except Christmas Day and Boxing Day.
NEXT MONTH Award-winning designer James Basson.



IN THE GREEN

A peek inside Belgian designer Alain Dor's garden reveals a series of cool outdoor spaces, each with its own distinct character

WORDS JONNY BRUCE PHOTOGRAPHS SIETSKE DE VRIES

To the left of the parterre, surrounded by *Osmanthus* x *burkwoodii*, is a covered swimming pool that also doubles as a glasshouse for storing tender pot plants in winter.

IN BRIEF

What A sequence of hedged garden areas with a rural atmosphere.
Where Hasselt, northeast Belgium.
Size Around four acres.
Soil Sandy loam.
Climate Continental with cool summers and moderately mild winters.
Hardiness zone USDA 9.

AS THE FOCUS PIVOTED INWARDS, SO THE GARDEN HAS EVOLVED INTO AN INTIMATE COLLECTION OF SPACES

No sign marks the narrow entrance of the drive to Alain Dor's private home, hidden between an uncompromising selection of austere grey brick houses and office blocks that line the road to Hasselt in Belgium. In refreshing contrast to this abundance of brick, the white gravel drive leads to a large house of faded pink plaster in a distinctly French style. This is where Alain grew up and where, for the past 25 years, he has been creating his own personal garden.

The house is a 1950s copy of a Parisian house discovered by Alain's parents on one of the family's many visits to France. His parents fell in love with it, and decided to build a replica back home in Belgium. The resulting building feels much older than it is – a trick that is repeated to good effect in its extensive garden, a little over four acres.

Alain discovered his love of gardens aged ten and has dedicated the past 41 years to building a successful garden design business. Despite his early enthusiasm, it was not until he took ownership of the family home in 1993 that he started to create his own vision. When he was growing up, the garden was little more than stretches of lawn under trees that opened out on to views of a rural landscape. This landscape has gone, and with it the views. Rapid expansion has seen Hasselt's suburbs extend and engulf the Dors' property. In response, Alain has thrown up multi-layered screens of trees and hedges to frame and protect a green haven amid the urban sprawl.

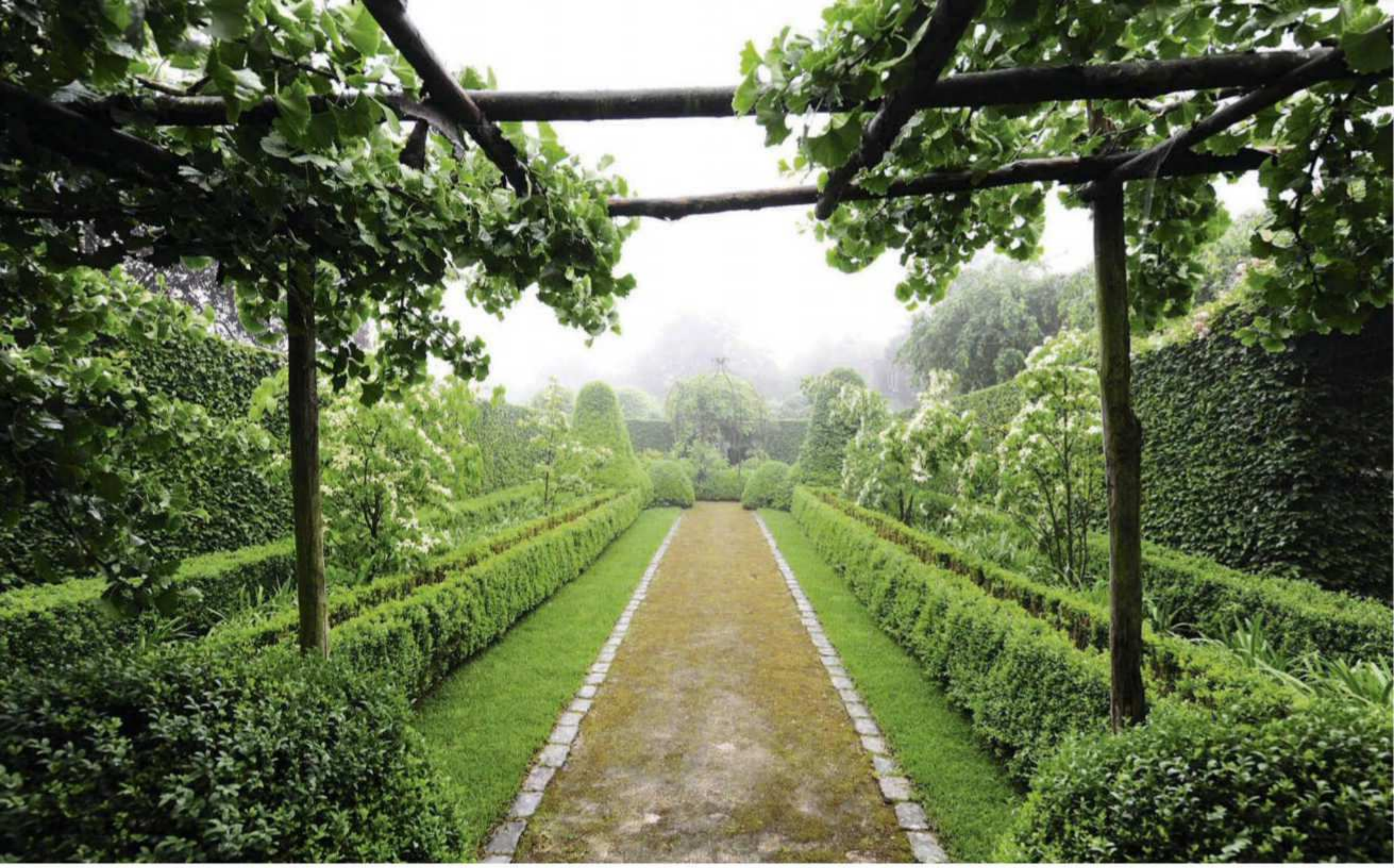
As the focus pivoted inwards, so the garden has evolved into an intimate collection of garden rooms. Looking out from the house, a large expanse of lawn has been retained, punctuated with clipped topiaries and a selection of strongly pruned apples (a Dutch dessert apple called 'Klumpke'). These characterful trees provide structure as well as a sense of age, which Alain is keen to accentuate. In the rest of the garden, reclaimed and rusted gates abound, while patinas of moss and lichen are encouraged to colonise stones and statues. With a chuckle, Alain explains how his gardener complains when it comes to cutting the two-metre-deep hedges, but is firm that these proportions are necessary to provide the comfortable feeling of an established garden.

Adding to the relaxed atmosphere is the crush of dogs that push themselves through the garden. Various gaps in hedges and topiary pieces need no explanation as six large hounds bound around the corner to greet Alain and his wife, Christaine, on the lawn. They add a joyful energy to the space, but it is unlikely that any of his smart clients, with their neatly designed gardens, would tolerate such destruction. Thankfully, in his own garden he can be more free.

The garden enjoys a relaxed formality that one associates with many English gardens, and Alain singles out Hidcote and Sissinghurst as being of particular influence. Indeed the garden's

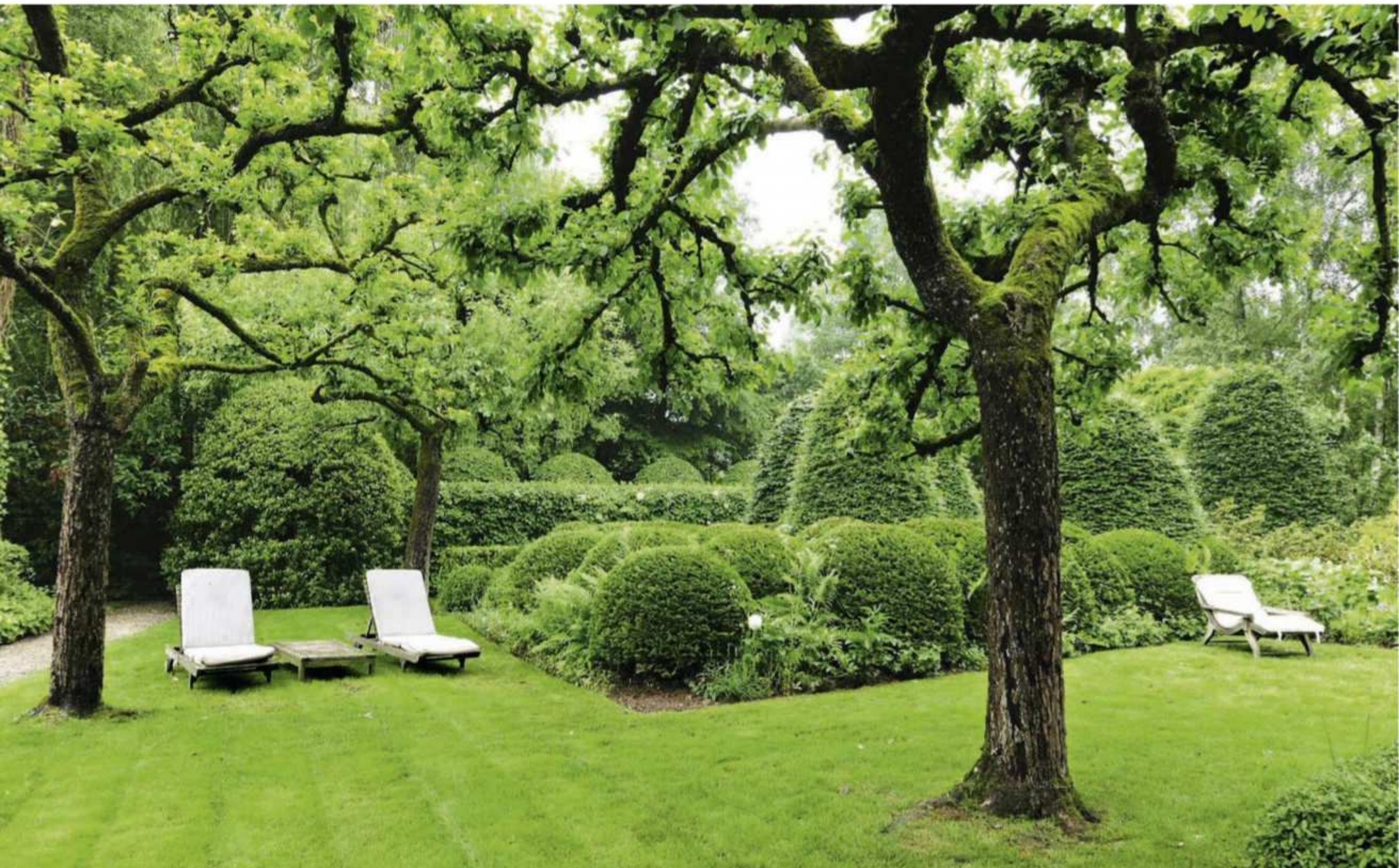
▷

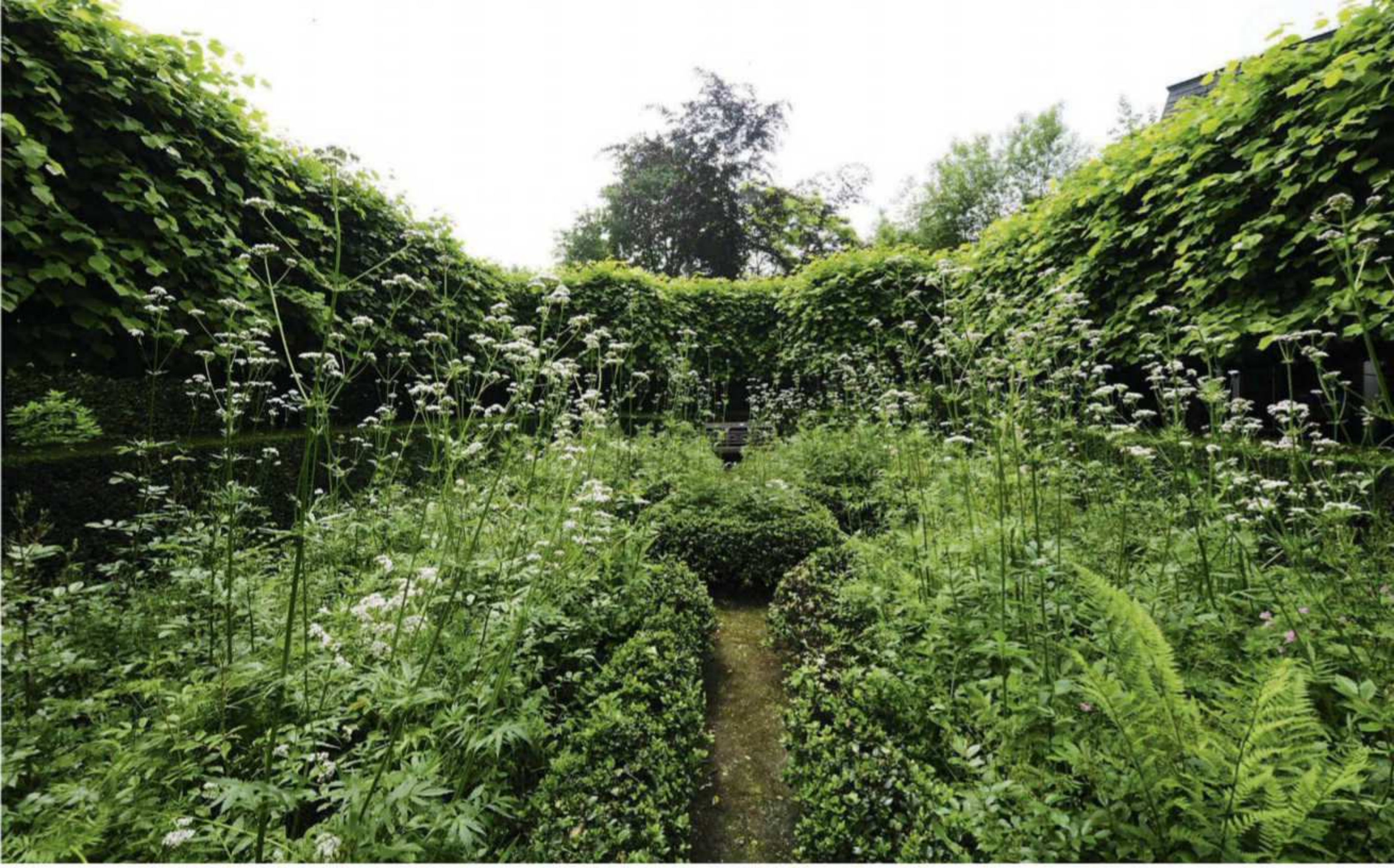
Right A sloping edging of yew frames a rectangular stone pool lined with copper and filled with waterlilies. The still water reflects the forms of self-sown ferns and pollarded white mulberry trees above to contemplative effect.



Above A wooden ginkgo-covered pergola inspired by Alain's frequent visits to Prieuré Notre Dame d'Orsan in France, leads to an avenue of *Cornus kousa* var. *chinensis* 'China Girl' underplanted with agapanthus and flanked by large, loosely clipped yew topiary.

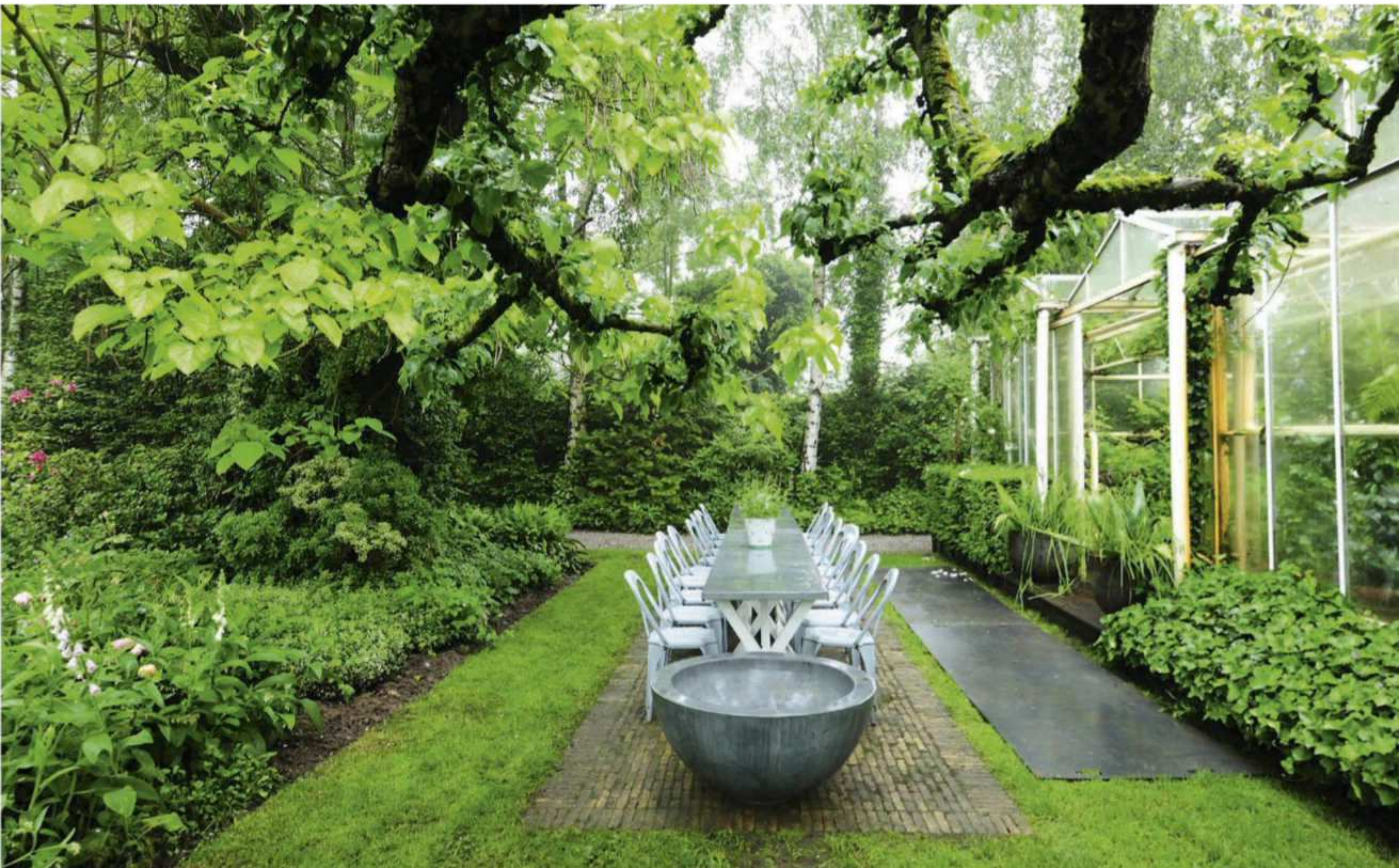
Below Mature fruit trees, strongly pruned over the years, have resulted in characterful shapes that give structure and a sense of age to the main lawn. Alain has always been keen to create the impression that the garden more mature than it actually is.

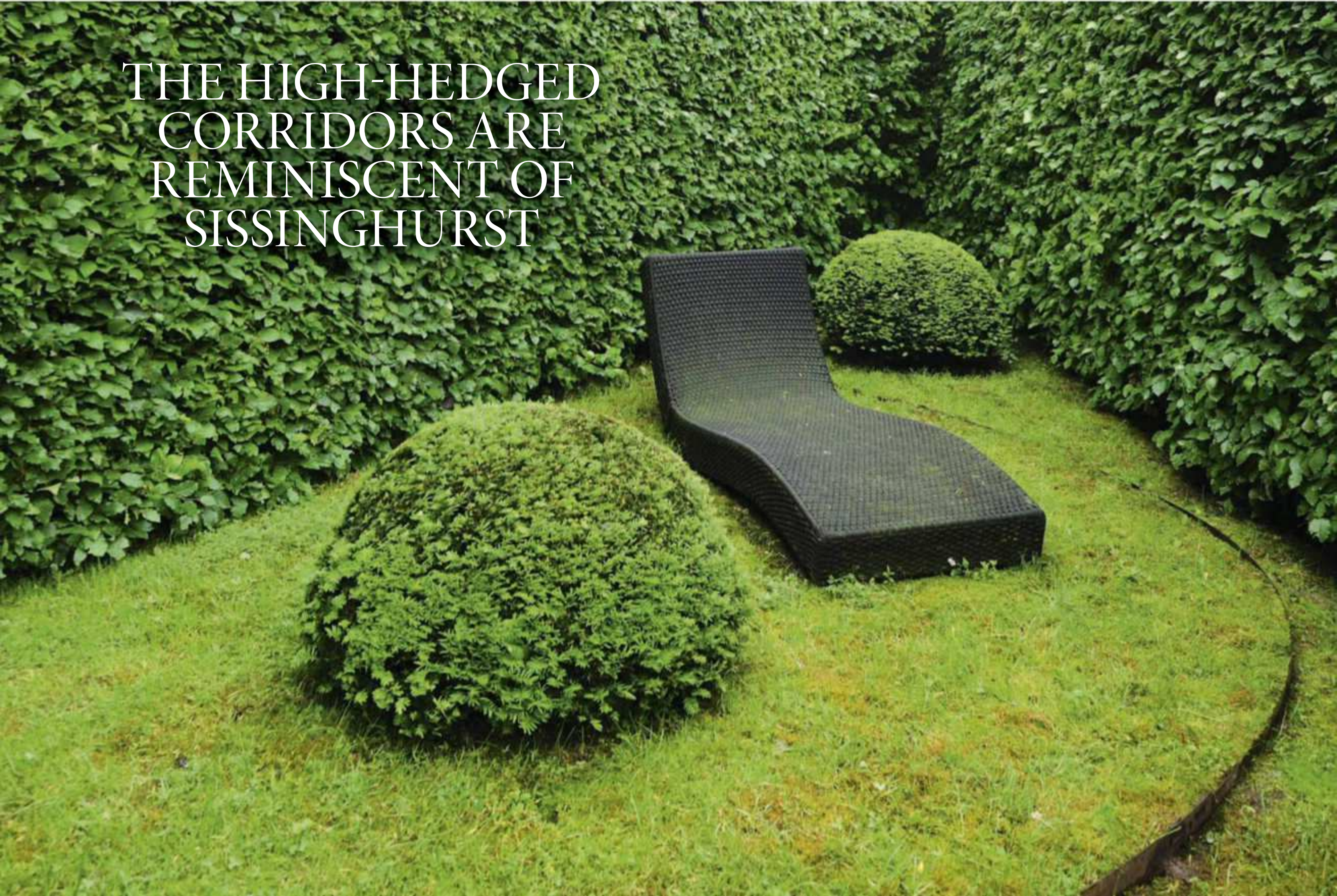




Above A certain degree of self-sowing is tolerated. Here *Valeriana officinalis* erupts among the clipped *Ilex* parterre to soften the geometry of the design and help create an atmosphere of relaxed formality.

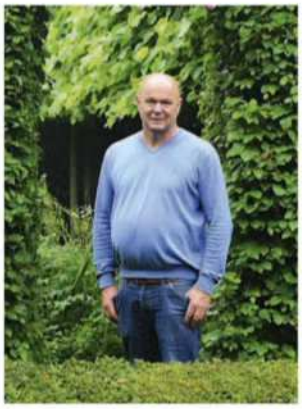
Below "You can achieve a beautiful result with few ingredients," says Alain. In this outdoor dining space, the restricted plant palette is reflected in the understated hard landscaping and furniture to great effect.





THE HIGH-HEDGED CORRIDORS ARE REMINISCENT OF SISSINGHURST

ALAIN'S 5 TIPS FOR A GREEN GARDEN



LAYERS
A combination of different hedge heights and clipped forms of various deciduous and evergreen shrubs results in a subtle yet complex backdrop of shimmering green. By blending moments of straight regularity with flowing curves, Alain has created a green frame that is both restful and dynamic.

HIGHLIGHTS
A restricted and harmonious colour palette of blues, pinks, purples and whites used in isolated groups helps accentuate the greenness. Climbers, such as roses and wisteria, also bring a moment of colour, drawing the eye up to the soft greens of the trees that surround the garden.

NATURAL MATERIALS
Stone and wood develop their own green patina of moss and lichen, which also provides the comfortable sense of an old garden. The wooden supports for climbers and wattle edging in the potager help maintain a rustic and relaxed aesthetic.

STRONG GEOMETRY
Bold, clipped hedges and topiary, albeit ones allowed to grow shaggy, provide a clarity of form in this garden. This helps to distinguish shape and provide structure, preventing the scene from blurring into a visual green soup.

EVERGREEN
Although deciduous elements are important and provide good foliage contrast in the spring and summer months, the dark green of *Buxus*, *Osmanthus* and *Taxus* gives year-round interest and forms an enduring skeleton from which the rest of the garden hangs.

▷ high-hedged corridors are instantly reminiscent of those at Sissinghurst Castle. In the romantic spirit of Vita Sackville-West, plants such as verbascum and valerian are allowed to self-sow between the clipped forms of *Ilex* x *meserveae* Blue Prince (= 'Conablu') and *Osmanthus* x *burkwoodii*, softening the geometry.

Although the garden is predominantly green, a restricted palette of flowering plants serves as harmonious highlights. Blues of wisteria and *Salvia nemorosa* complement the purples of alliums and verbena, while pale-pink *Valeriana officinalis* and the pure-white bracts of *Cornus kousa* var. *chinensis* 'China Girl' lighten the scene. Alain advocates using 'few ingredients', but is convinced that the borders should be full and that no soil should be visible during the summer. Ferns and hostas play a useful role in covering large areas while adding to the shimmering layers of green.

The maze-like path leads from one area to another – each with its own character. A particularly effective creation is a simple rectangular stone pool, filled with water lilies and framed by deep slopes of *Taxus* beneath pollarded *Morus alba*. Self-sown *Dryopteris* ferns erupt alongside the trunks of the limes, adding another texture to this purely green and contemplative space.

Beyond this, a winding path generously edged with undulating *Acer campestre* leads to a small potager. The wattle-edged planters and various wooden structures hint at another profound influence, the magnificent gardens at the Prieuré Notre Dame d'Orsan, in France's Loire Valley. This is one of Alain's favourite gardens, and he shares its organic philosophy. In neither his private garden nor those of his clients does he permit the use of pesticides, hoping to establish a natural and healthy community of wildlife to help control pests and disease.

Alain calculates that it takes 1,500 hours a year to maintain the garden to a good standard. Most of this is spent on the hedges, and after one big clean-up in early spring, Alain is quite happy to let the garden take its own path to ensure the relaxed atmosphere that he and his wife so enjoy. □

USEFUL INFORMATION
Address Luikersteenweg 231, 3500 Hasselt, Belgium.
Tel + 32 (0)11 27 15 25. **Website** alaindor.be
Open The garden is open the first three Sundays in June, from 1pm to 6pm.

Left above A restrained palette of blue, purple, white and pale-pink flowering plants accentuates the greenery.

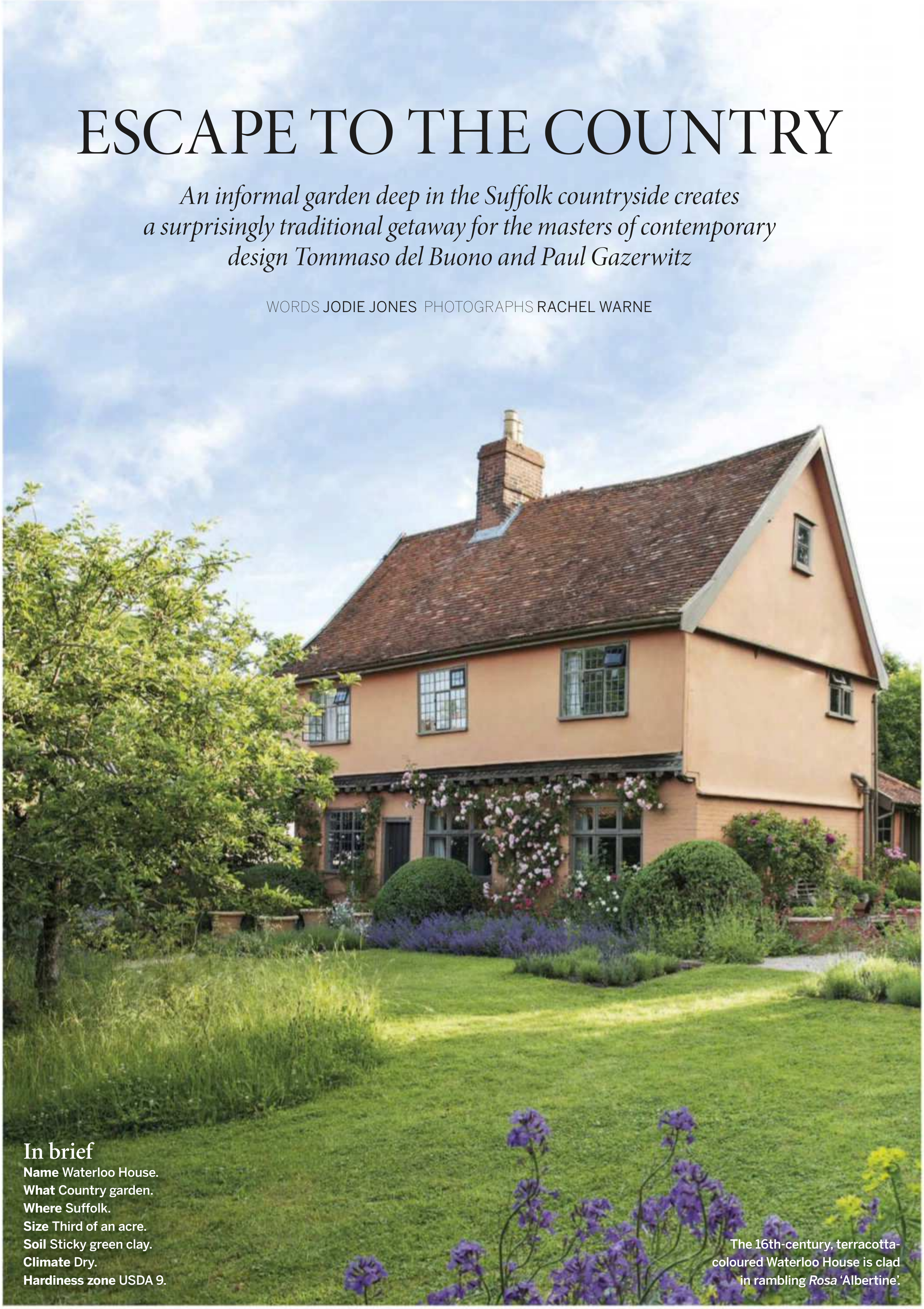
Left below A low and comfortable seat provides an opportunity to rest in a secluded corner. The simple geometry of the clipped topiary and slowing line of the edging contributes to a restful atmosphere.

The delicate, single-flowered *Rosa* x *odorata* 'Mutabilis' has good glossy foliage and petals that change colour as each flower opens and matures. It thrives in its sunny location in the garden of Waterloo House, where it is reminiscent of long, hot summers in Tommaso's native Tuscany.

ESCAPE TO THE COUNTRY

An informal garden deep in the Suffolk countryside creates a surprisingly traditional getaway for the masters of contemporary design Tommaso del Buono and Paul Gazerwitz

WORDS JODIE JONES PHOTOGRAPHS RACHEL WARNE



In brief

Name Waterloo House.
What Country garden.
Where Suffolk.
Size Third of an acre.
Soil Sticky green clay.
Climate Dry.
Hardiness zone USDA 9.

The 16th-century, terracotta-coloured Waterloo House is clad in rambling *Rosa* 'Albertine'.

PEOPLE THINK THEY KNOW OUR STYLE, BUT AS A DESIGNER YOU SHOULD RESPOND TO YOUR SURROUNDINGS

It is hard to imagine that cars were once parked in front of the house, where clipped box, lavender, lawn and meadow grass now combine to form a picture-perfect country garden.

Suffolk is a pretty county, full of winding lanes, undulating fields and houses painted in pastel shades. Beside every other front gate stands a table with a handwritten note, an honesty box and a selection of homegrown produce for sale. It feels a very long way from London, and quite a long way from the 21st century. It is most definitely not the sort of place you would expect Tommaso del Buono and Paul Gazerwitz, famed designers of sleek modernist gardens, to choose as their weekend bolthole.“It is wonderful to have found somewhere so set apart from our Monday to Friday lives,” says Tommaso.

It was Paul who first came across the house. “It needed some renovation,” he recalls. “There was no kitchen to speak of and the bathroom needed quite a bit of work. The garden was open to the road on two sides, sloping up from front to back, with a rough driveway that ended right outside the living room window.” Yet both men instantly fell for the potential it offered and bought it in 2009.

With a limited budget and less time, they focused first on making the house habitable then in 2011 that they started work on the garden. “By that time we had a feel for the place,” says Paul. “I used to set up a deckchair in different places and just take in the view, the way the light fell, what time of day was best where.” Once it was time to start work, it took less than an hour to sketch out a plan. “We wanted it to be understated. People think they know our style, but as a designer you should respond to your surroundings,” says Paul. “A contemporary urban garden would look ridiculously out of place here.”

They wanted a sense of informality with a minimum of hard landscaping. It took just a couple of days for a man with a JCB digger to level out a small potager terrace by the kitchen door, to lessen the slope of the lawn beyond it and then to bank up the resultant spoil into a gentle mound at the far end of the garden. Like all good design interventions, it has been so successful that it is hard to imagine it ever looked any different. Paths were laid in Breedon gravel and Suffolk ▷

12 OF TOMMASO AND PAUL'S RECOMMENDED PLANTS

1 *Geranium psilostemon*
A large but delicate geranium with wiry stems and shocking-magenta flowers. It is best planted among grasses and other plants that can support its lax flower stalks. 1.2m. AGM*. RHS H7, USDA 5a-7b†.

2 *Euphorbia schillingii*
The long-lasting, lime-green flowers of this plant beautifully complement a blue and magenta colour palette. It has delicate foliage with a white rib and stems that turn red in the autumn, making it perfect for multi-seasonal interest. 1m. AGM. RHS H5.

3 *Knautia macedonica*
The flowers are the colour of ripe cherries and become luminescent in the morning sunlight. It is prone to powdery mildew so is best planted among herbaceous plants to disguise this inevitable occurrence. 80cm. RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.

4 *Borago officinalis*
This useful, pretty herb should be more widely grown. Its heavenly blue flowers are adored by bees. It will self-seed where it is happy. 90cm. RHS H5, USDA 2a-11.

5 *Centranthus ruber*
Prefers to grow in gravel and walls and likes the sun. Does not stay put and will seed itself freely into its preferred spots. Flowers in June and will repeat if cut back after the first flush. The nectar of the flowers is the favourite tipple of the hawk moth. 90cm. RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.

6 *Lychnis coronaria*
A striking combination of silvery foliage and magenta flowers. It makes a great companion plant among bearded irises as it will take over the display once the blowsy blooms of the iris are over. 90cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

Turn the page for more key plants

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.

7

8

9

10

11

12

12 RECOMMENDED PLANTS CONTINUED

7 *Rosa* 'Albertine'
A classic rambling rose with a delicious scent. Although it blooms only once, the memory of it will last for the entire year. The stems are very thorny so take care when pruning it. 5m. AGM. RHS H6.

8 *Geranium pratense* 'Mrs Kendall Clarke'
A vigorous geranium with large, early trusses of veined, pale-blue flowers. The initial flowering is specular, with occasional repeat flowering later in the summer if cut back. 60cm. AGM. RHS H7.

9 *Salvia* 'Amistad'
A stunning, free-flowering salvia with black calyxes and dark-blue trumpets that has been in the garden for two seasons now. It has aromatic, slightly downy, corrugated, bright-green leaves with pointed ends. It has so far performed very well and has overwintered successfully in Suffolk. An easy plant to propagate from cuttings. 1.2m. AGM. RHS H3.

10 *Eruca vesicaria* subsp. *sativa*
Paul and Tommaso grow rocket as a salad leaf for its fiery, peppery taste, of course, but they also try to leave a few plants to go to seed, as the flowers are so delicate, and a beautiful shade of pale yellow. As a salad crop, it is best to make repeat sowings throughout the summer to ensure a continuous supply of fresh leaves.

11 *Foeniculum vulgare* 'Purpureum'
A good border filler with fluffy foliage, this bronze fennel can provide a striking contrast with more architectural plants. It tends to self-seed everywhere, though, so you will have to thin its offspring judiciously. 1.8m. RHS H5, USDA 4a-9b.

12 *Cosmos bipinnatus* 'Xanthos'
A new cultivar that Paul and Tommaso have trialled this year. The daisy-like flowers are a lovely shade of pale yellow, fading to white around the edge, which mixes well with the other flowers in the garden. It is more compact than other cosmos cultivars, and as a result does not lend itself to cutting, but it is still a good border filler. 60cm. RHS H3.

The cool, calm rear garden relies for its impact on a sinuous line of hedging, which runs up the slope away from the house to a wildflower meadow that blends with the woodland beyond.

Work in progress

Tommaso and Paul describe their country garden as a work in progress. "It is important to think about your garden as a whole from very early on – how you will use it and where you want to go with it. Having a plan helps you avoid making big mistakes," says Tommaso. "But once you have that in place, it doesn't matter how long you take to complete it. And don't feel too married to your drawings. Be prepared to adapt. Things grow in sunny places that in time become shady. Plants grow too large for the space available. You must always be prepared to reconsider. Some trees and shrubs are important for structure, but these mature slowly. You also need more ephemeral plants to get a garden started. These include things such as erysimum, which offer quick rewards but don't last for too long. You enjoy them for a couple of years, then say goodbye."

▷ red brick, which was also used to create a step up from the lane outside. The gap through which cars used to trundle up the drive was filled with yew hedging, and a gate, set at right angles to one side, creates an offset entrance that conceals the house.

Within these green walls, the garden is positively bucolic. "Please don't call it a cottage garden," says Tommaso. "I think of it as relaxed." This is apparent the minute you set foot on the basket-weave brick and gravel front path, edged on the right by a sea of lavender and on the left by a cheerful jumble of alchemilla, roses, hardy geraniums and fragrant 'Jane Phillips' iris. Fennel, valerian and alchemilla have seeded into the gravel with gay abandon.

The bell pull is hidden behind a swaying clump of *Verbena bonariensis* and the rich terracotta walls are garlanded in vintage-pink 'Albertine' roses. Centranthus, catmint and *Knautia macedonica* foam in frothy profusion around the house, anchored by three vast balls of clipped box, which impose just the right degree of order on the chaos. The overall impression is of warmth, welcome and joyful prettiness. There is a small productive garden outside the kitchen, but it proved difficult to grow vegetables properly when the pair could only make infrequent visits, so the timber-edged beds now contain herbs, flowers for cutting, and a few tomatoes, raspberries and alpine strawberries.

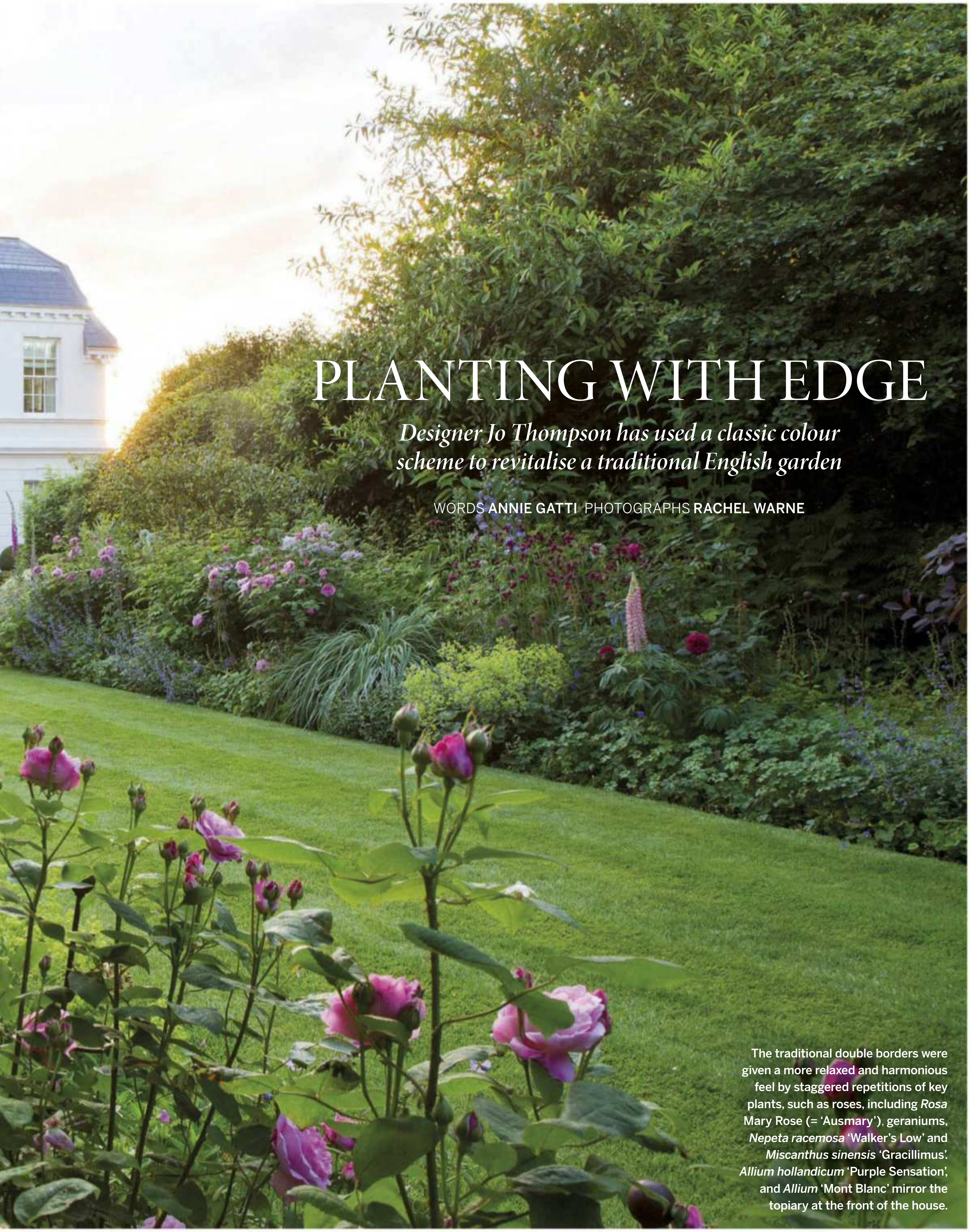
The rear of the garden is defined by a simple green hedge that follows a serpentine path around a lawn that's more clover than grass, studded with young apple and walnut trees. In the middle a weathered bench veiled in tall grass sits in the shade of a large sycamore. "This is not a beautiful tree, but it has an age and a presence that this garden needs just now," says Tommaso. It is an unexpected compromise from the leading design practice of del Buono Gazerwitz, but this whole garden is completely unexpected too. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Find out more about Tommaso and Paul's work at **delbuono-gazerwitz.co.uk**

IN BRIEF

Name Ladham House.
What Formal garden with 60m-long double borders against a backdrop of mature trees and shrubs.
Where Goudhurst, Kent.
Size Ten acres of formal gardens.
Soil Improved Wealden clay with seams of acid soil.
Climate Temperate.
Hardiness zone USDA 9.

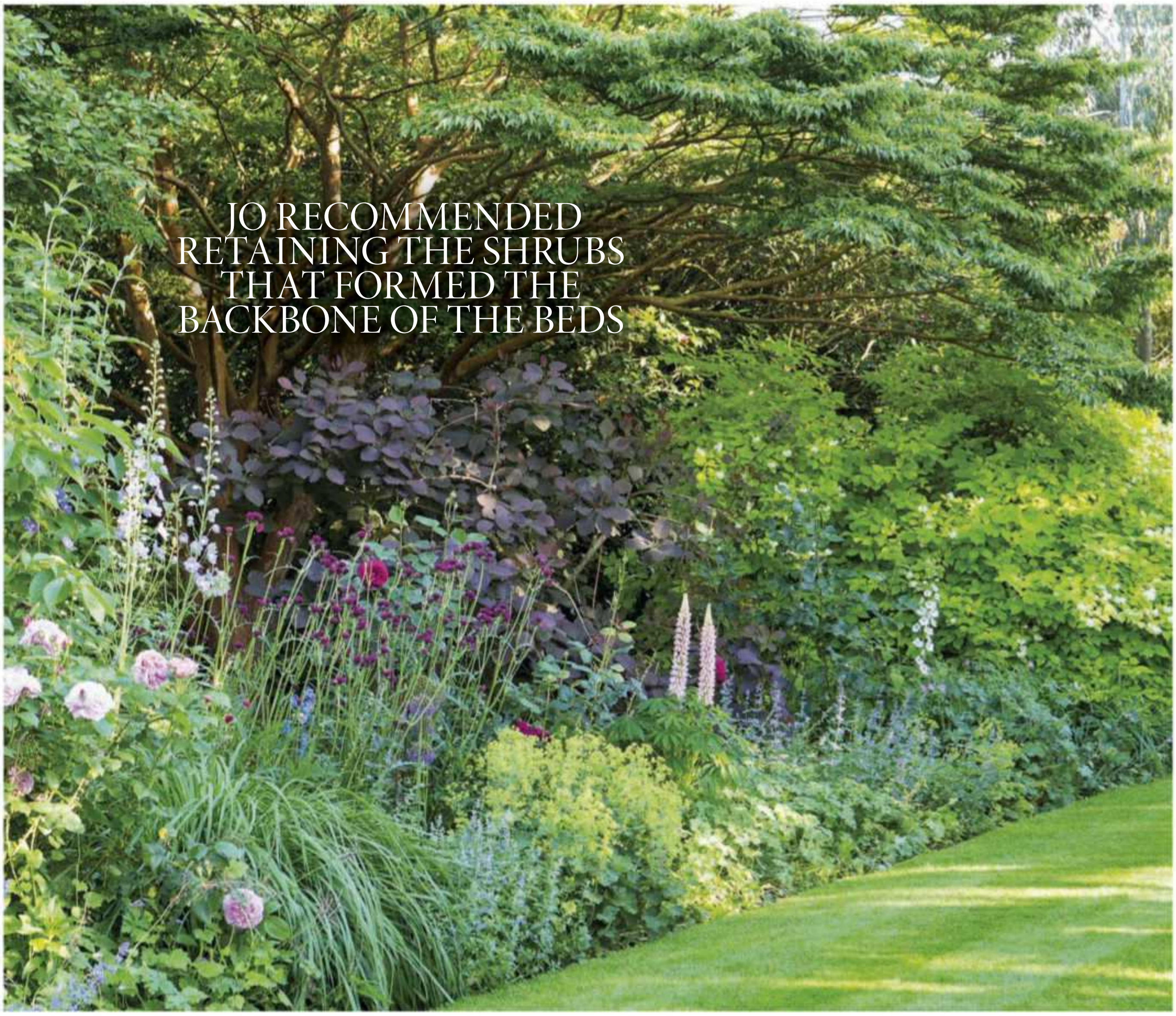


PLANTING WITH EDGE

Designer Jo Thompson has used a classic colour scheme to revitalise a traditional English garden

WORDS **ANNIE GATTI** PHOTOGRAPHS **RACHEL WARNE**

The traditional double borders were given a more relaxed and harmonious feel by staggered repetitions of key plants, such as roses, including *Rosa* Mary Rose (= 'Ausmary'), geraniums, *Nepeta racemosa* 'Walker's Low' and *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Gracillimus'. *Allium hollandicum* 'Purple Sensation', and *Allium* 'Mont Blanc' mirror the topiary at the front of the house.



JO RECOMMENDED RETAINING THE SHRUBS THAT FORMED THE BACKBONE OF THE BEDS

Ladham House shares the same view across the rolling Kentish Weald as nearby Sissinghurst. It sits in ten acres of formal gardens that were established in the late 19th century by the Jessel family. These now comprise a rose garden, rockery, arboretum, yew walk leading to a formal pond and, framing the front façade, two 60m-long herbaceous borders flanked by bands of mature specimen trees and shrubs that include the stunning deep-red form of *Magnolia campbellii* 'Betty Jessel'.

When designer Jo Thompson was commissioned by the current owners Guy and Nicola Johnson to refresh the old-fashioned borders, she recommended retaining and reshaping the shrubs that formed the backbone of the beds but starting anew with the perennials. The result is a relaxed scheme that flows seamlessly down the lawn in tones of pink, blue and purple, with accents of deep red and green and white.

What was the brief?
The owners wanted a fresher, more relaxed feel to the borders that would have impact but would not be formal nor too manicured. They wanted to keep the backdrop of specimen trees and shrubs and integrate a large sculpture into a circular bed beyond the borders.

What elements were not working?
There was no flow and many of the shrubs were overgrown and shaggy, and had crowded out the perennials. Both borders lacked drama and there was no discernible colour scheme.

How did you start?
I spent time taking stock of what was there, looking at what shrubs we could keep and shape, such as choisya and cotinus, and those we needed to get rid of because they were never going to get back to any kind of sensible shape. ▷

Clockwise from above

Jo reshaped the shrub layer which included *Cotinus coggygria* 'Royal Purple' and *Choisya ternata*, as it provides a smooth transition in height between the mature trees and the low herbaceous planting.

***Cirsium rivulare* picks up the inky red** of *Rosa* 'Charles de Mills' and creates an airy buffer between this and the pale-pink *Rosa* Mary Rose (= 'Ausmary') further down the border. The lupins were added by the owners.

A limestone bench, offset by the dark-green curtain of clipped yew, forms a focal point at the end of the lawn. Beyond is a towering canopy of trees and shrubs, including a mature rhododendron.

Jo's colour palette was chosen to tone with the strong purples of existing shrubs and trees such as *Cotinus* 'Grace' and *Prunus cerasifera* 'Nigra'.

Overgrown *Pittosporum tenuifolium* and *Berberis thunbergii* f. *atropurpurea* bushes were retained and clipped into spheres, creating a link between the formality of the limestone steps and urns and the relaxed feel of the borders.

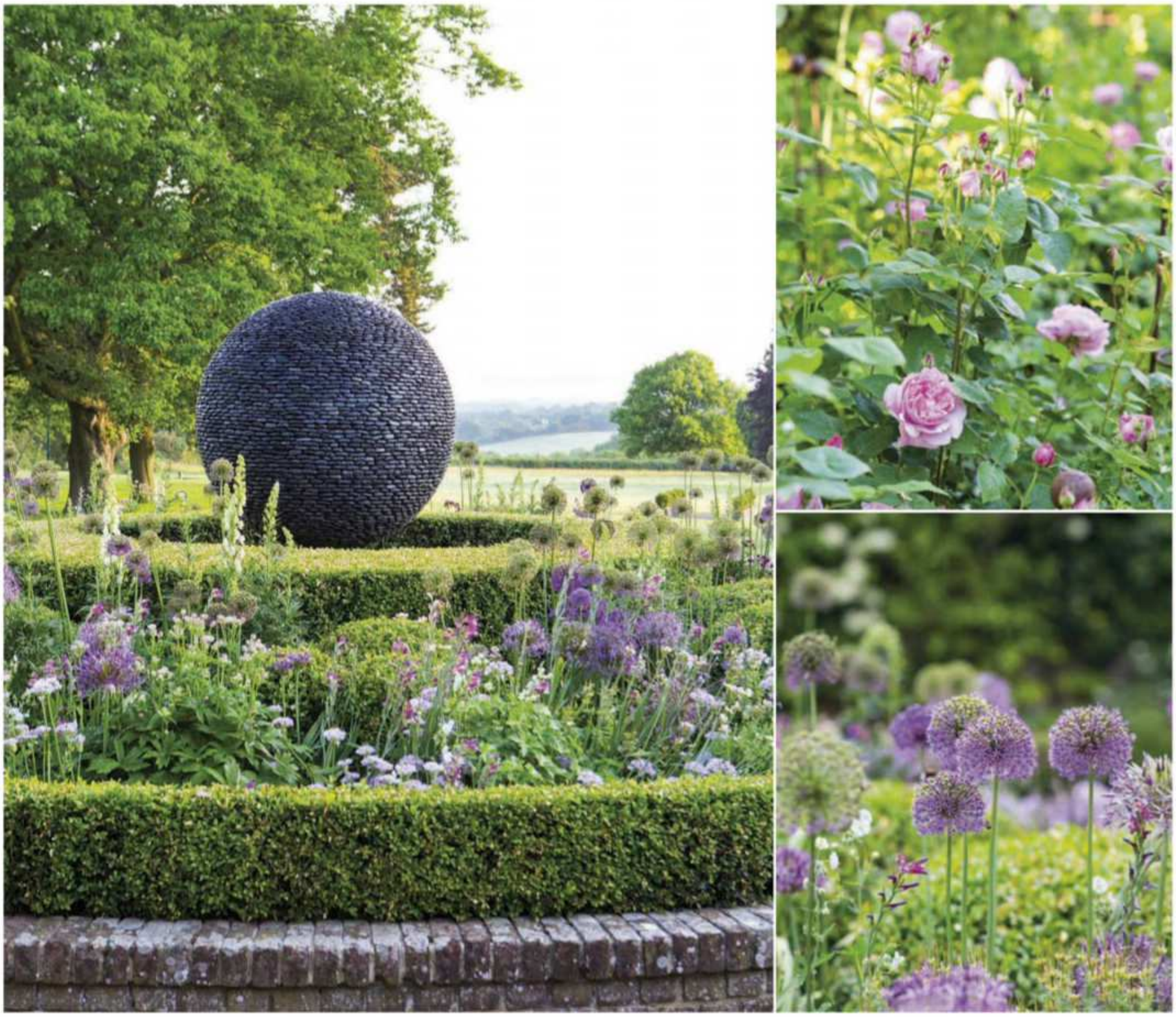
JO THOMPSON'S TIPS FOR REINVIGORATING BORDERS

Look at things you can reshape. The berberis in the borders at Ladham House was a big, wild shrub, but we tamed it into a lovely structural dome. Leave at least a couple of metres within which to plant, otherwise it will be difficult to accommodate enough plants of different heights to make an impact.

Improve the soil with organic matter and mulches, taking care not to disturb tree roots.

Plant in bigger rather than small groups. Don't be scared to have taller plants near the front of the border as they can create a veil to look through and soften what is behind.

Look at the foliage of existing shrubs and see what will harmonise with it. For example, I placed dark-red *Rosa* 'Charles de Mills' in front of the cotinus as it would be easier on the eye against the purple foliage than the pink-flowered *Rosa* Mary Rose (= 'Ausmary'). I then used *Cirsium rivulare* to break up these two roses.



As we moved down the beds, I wanted to keep shrubs that would give medium height structure to provide a link between the trees and the low herbaceous planting. Once I'd plotted the shrubs we were keeping, there was masses of space for new planting.

How did you choose the infill planting?

First I decided on the structural colour, by which I mean plants that create blocks or big swathes of colour – in these borders, the roses. I slotted these into the planting plan at staggered intervals to create informality. We planted them in groups of threes, about 1.5m to 2m from each other in a looped triangle to give randomness to the overall shape. I chose repeat-flowering roses to provide colour throughout the summer months. I then plotted drifts of colour to go between the structural colour. I wanted to keep the scheme simple, so I used things like campanula, nepeta and *Geranium phaeum*, and plants with an airy form, such as *Alchemilla mollis*, in groups of five, seven and nine, and drifted them in front of, and beside, the roses. I planned for seasonality, with bulbs such as tulips and *Gladiolus communis* subsp. *byzantinus* providing a succession throughout the borders.

How did you place the large piece of sculpture?

The owners wanted the polished puddlestone sphere by David Harber in a circular bed that had been planted with bulbs at the edge of the driveway, against the backdrop of the Weald landscape. We wanted to hide the plinth, so I added circular tiers of clipped box. I also planted box domes within the beds in a nod to the rolling landscape and to provide useful winter structure. The informal planting has a meadow feel – we wanted to avoid anything too manicured in front of that landscape.

USEFUL INFORMATION

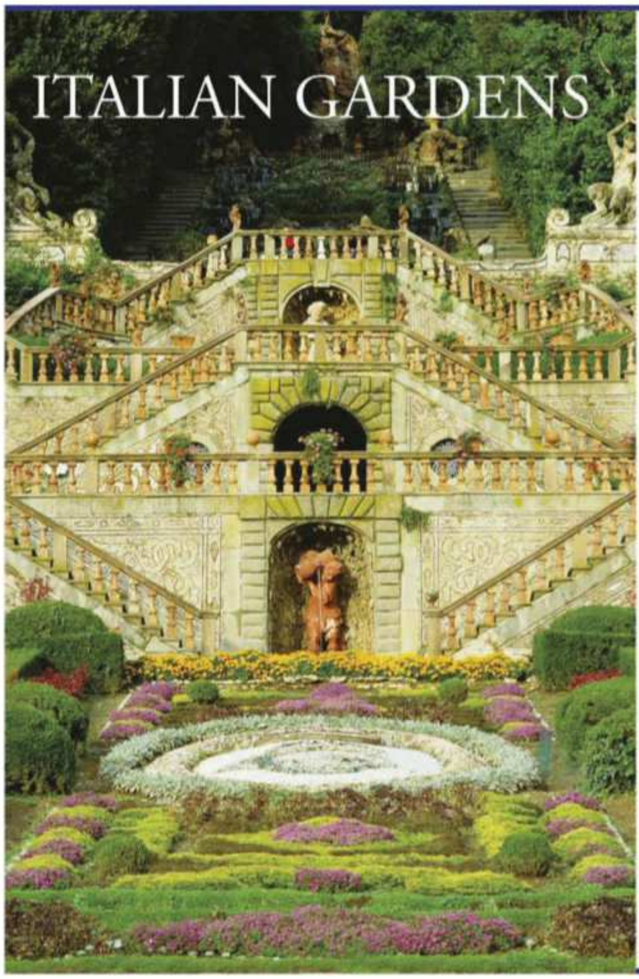
Find out more about Jo's work at **jothompson-garden-design.co.uk**

Clockwise from top left

Clipped box is used to create the parterre structure of this circular bed, which has David Harber's *Dark Planet* puddlestone sculpture at its centre. The meadow-like effect of the infill planting is composed of *Astrantia* 'Buckland', *Scabiosa* 'Butterfly Blue', *Allium hollandicum* 'Purple Sensation', *Allium cristophii*, *Allium schubertii* and *Aconitum napellus* subsp. *vulgare* 'Albidum'.

Fragrant *Rosa* Mary Rose (= 'Ausmary') is repeated through the borders in groups of three at staggered intervals to create a more relaxed scheme. Towards the shadier end of the borders it is replaced by shell-pink *Rosa* 'Stanwell Perpetual' which continues to bloom until late in the season.

Drifts of *Allium hollandicum* 'Purple Sensation' in the circular bed make a visual link with the double borders where, supported by rusted steel spikes, they are also woven through the herbaceous planting. In winter the steel spikes provide punctuation marks through the borders.



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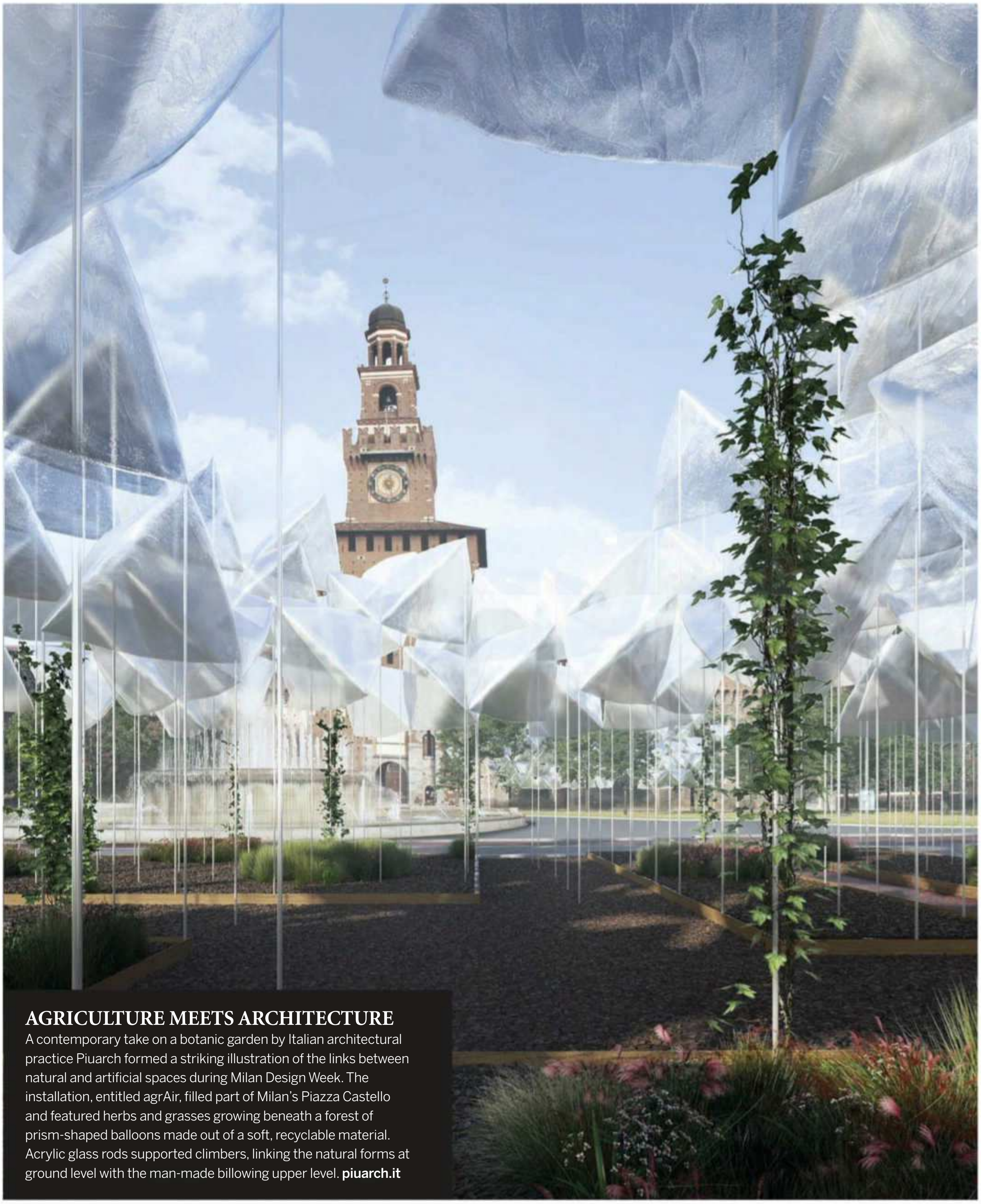

PIUARCH

AGRICULTURE MEETS ARCHITECTURE

A contemporary take on a botanic garden by Italian architectural practice Piuarch formed a striking illustration of the links between natural and artificial spaces during Milan Design Week. The installation, entitled agrAir, filled part of Milan's Piazza Castello and featured herbs and grasses growing beneath a forest of prism-shaped balloons made out of a soft, recyclable material. Acrylic glass rods supported climbers, linking the natural forms at ground level with the man-made billowing upper level. **piuarch.it**

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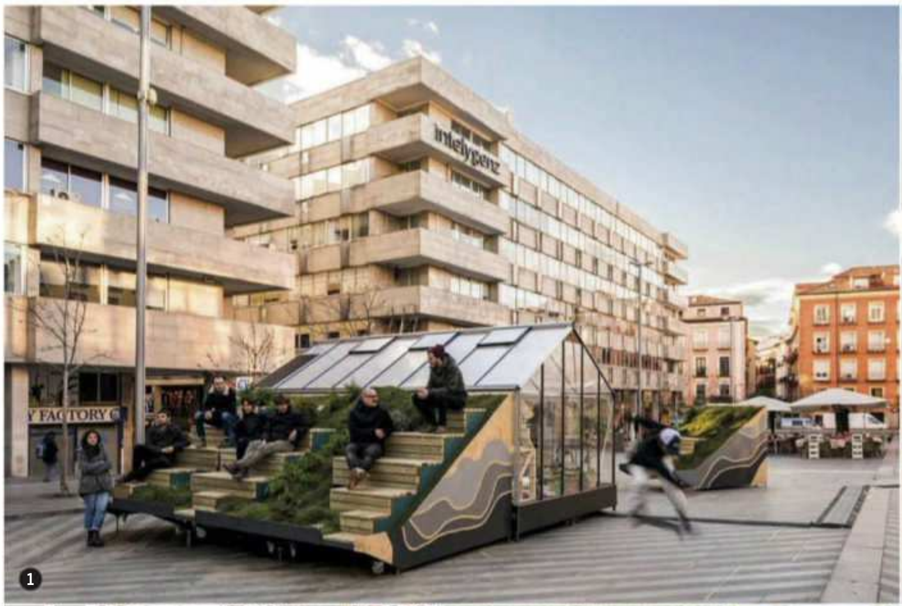
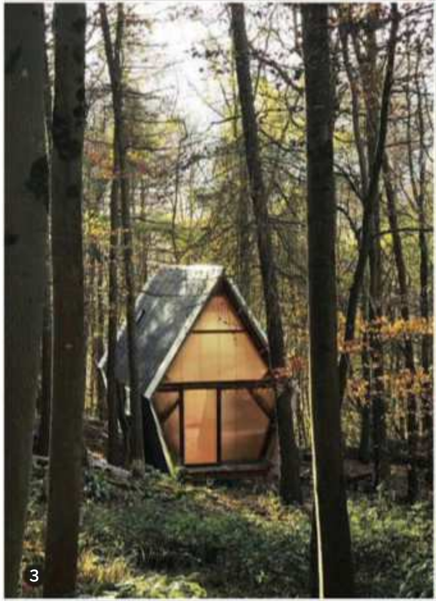
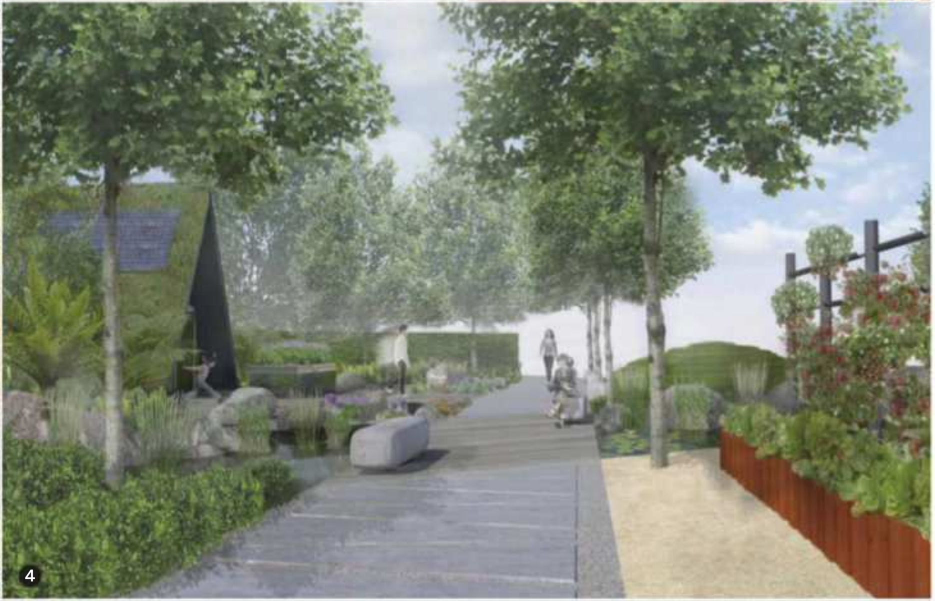






1 JAVIER DE PAZ GARCIA; 2 RYAN ALEXANDER ASSOCIATES; 3 INVISIBLE STUDIO; 4 NILUFER DANIS.

① PORTABLE DESIGN STUDIO

A portable design studio, shaped like a greenhouse and fitted with movable seating blocks surrounded by grassy montane planting on each side, was used as a hub for urban design talks and workshops at the Madrid Design Festival in February. Built by Madrid-based Enorme Studio for MINI Spain, the portable office is lit by solar energy, which also powers USB sockets and creates a light space for potted plants. The installation was designed to promote new thinking about urban design and raise collective awareness about our environment. **enormestudio.es/mountain-in-the-moon**

② APL SUPREME WINNER

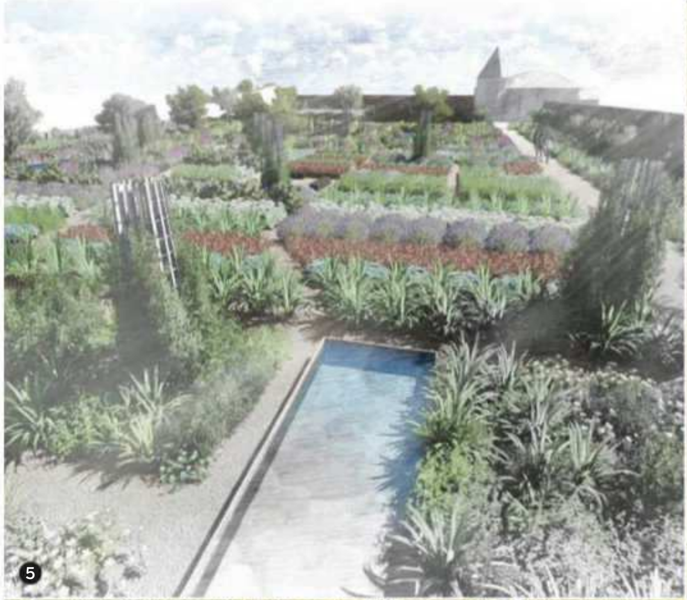
Ryan Alexander & Associates was awarded Supreme Winner at this year's Association of Professional Landscapers (APL) awards for the garden design and build of a nine-acre plot around a new luxury family home in Cookham, Berkshire, The 12-month project created a wildflower meadow, formal lawn, orchard and walled kitchen garden, sunken garden, children's play area, and pool and guest house terrace. Judges described the build as 'impressive and inspirational'. Wardrop Designs won Designer of the Year for a north-facing garden on three levels in Hampstead, London. **ryanalexanderassociates.com**

③ SHELTER IN WOOD

Bath-based Invisible Studio has built a low-cost prototype house from locally grown unseasoned timber and offcuts of pine. Costing just £20,000, the 40 square-metre house is lined with scavenged insulation materials and kitted out as a home but could be adapted as a workspace or studio. Polycarbonate panels allow light to fill the space, while the exterior is clad in corrugated fibreglass and steel. It is mounted on a steel chassis and designed to be transportable on public roads. Some of the materials used were left over from the Studio in the Woods project, which promotes building with materials to hand. **invisiblestudio.org**

④ COMMUNITY GARDEN

Nilufer Danis of Lotus Design Studio has been commissioned by the International Association of Horticultural producers to design a community garden for the 2018 Taichung World Flora Exposition in Taiwan, which runs from 3 November 2018 to 4 April 2019. The garden focuses on the benefits of green spaces for communities who mostly live in apartments without access to their own garden or outdoor space. It will include vertical gardens, a natural pond, raised beds, a rain garden and an orchard. An eco-friendly office, made from recycled shipping containers, will support a green roof. **lotusdesignstudio.co.uk**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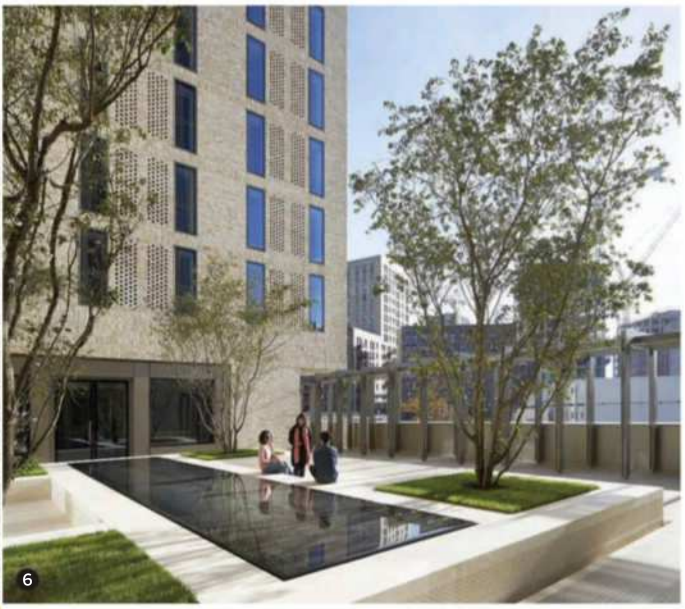
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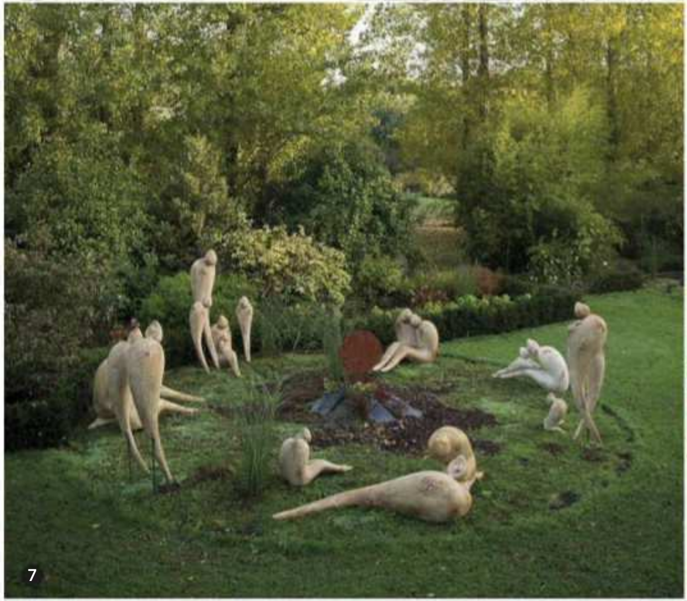
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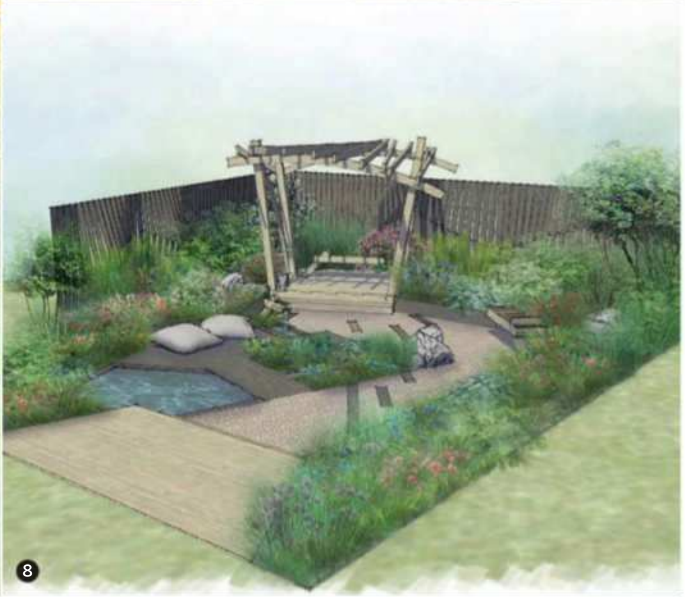
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⑤ KITCHEN GARDEN

Harris Bugg Studio has won a national competition to design the new Kitchen Garden at RHS Bridgewater. Drawing on Bridgewater's setting alongside the historic Bridgewater Canal, the designers used a section of the canal to devise a strikingly original network of paths through the walled space. Historic field patterns were the blueprint for the layout of the individual beds within the four distinct growing areas, which include a classic fruit and vegetable area, an ornamental productive plot, a permaculture garden and the walls. Ground work begins this summer. **harrisbugg.com**

⑥ COURTYARD GARDENS UNLOCKED

Two new courtyard gardens, designed by Vladimir Djurovic will open to the public on 9 June (12-4pm) for Open Squares Weekend. The gardens are part of Victoria Hall, a Stanton-Williams-designed student hall of residence at the Institute of Islamic Studies in King's Cross, London. Water is a central element in both Islamic-inspired gardens, one on the first floor and the other on the eighth, with multi-stemmed *Prunus x subhirtella* underplanted with spring bulbs, providing vertical accents and shade. 25 Canal Reach, London N1C 4DD. **opensquares.org/2018**

⑦ BAPTISM BY FIRE

French sculptor Robert Arnoux is offering guided tours of his workshop garden in Normandy on selected dates this summer (starting 1-3 June). A highlight is the *Jardin du Feu*, devised with landscape gardener Guillaume Gosse de Gorre, which follows the idea of purification by fire. An inner circle of shale depicts the fire. This is ringed by raised earth, suggesting the action of magma. The outer circle shows human figures united and purified, sculpted on a resin base and finished with a fresco technique. 309 Sente Cauvillaise, 76740 La Chapelle sur Dun, Normandy. To book, email **robertanoux@wanadoo.fr**

⑧ RHS CHATSWORTH FLOWER SHOW

The RHS's newest flower show returns for a second year with an installation of more than 100 varieties of orchid, and feature gardens by Paul Hervey-Brookes and Carl Hardman. There are five show gardens in competition, including Sheffield designer Phil Hirst's garden, which celebrates the landscape of the Peak District. Natural oak is used for the tilted pavilion and structural blocks among the planting, and charred oak for the decking, fencing and stream edging. The planting includes ornamental species suited to the damp conditions found on the moors. 6-10 June. **rhs.org.uk**

5 HARRIS BUGG STUDIO; 6 VICTORIA HALL BY STANTON WILLIAMS ARCHITECTS ©HUFTON + CROW; 7 YANN MONEL; 8 PHIL HIRST.

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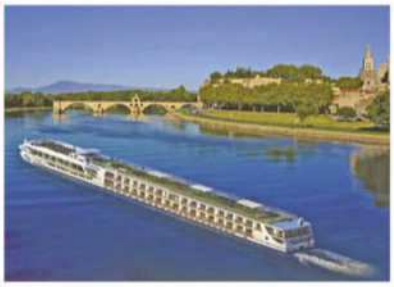
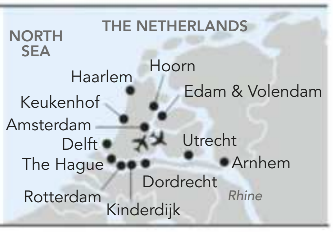


GLORIOUS GARDENS & THE GOLDEN AGE OF DUTCH ART



A journey along the Dutch waterways exploring the horticultural highlights and art treasures of the Netherlands aboard the MS Royal Emerald – 28th March to 6th April & 6th to 15th April 2019

Spring is the perfect time of year to immerse yourself in the cultural and horticultural splendours of the Netherlands. Join us aboard the MS Royal Emerald as we explore the countryside in some depth, visiting the magnificent floral displays of the Keukenhof, the beautifully picturesque towns of the Zuider Zee, the botanical gardens in Utrecht, and of course the art treasures of Amsterdam and The Hague.

The Itinerary in Brief

Day 1 London, Bristol, Manchester or Edinburgh to Amsterdam, Netherlands. Fly from your chosen airport by scheduled flight or travel by train in Standard Premier Class from London St Pancras. Drive to the MS Royal Emerald and embark.

Day 2 Amsterdam. After breakfast on board, depart for a visit to the Rijksmuseum, arguably Amsterdam's most important art venue. Return to the ship for lunch, and this afternoon is at leisure to explore ashore or relax on board your ship. Alternatively, there will be an optional tour to visit the "Bloemenmarkt", one of the city's most colourful attractions.

Day 3 Amsterdam. After breakfast today we will depart for the Van Gogh Museum, which houses one of the world's largest collection of works by the artist. Return to the ship for lunch and this afternoon there will be a choice of included excursions. Join a relaxing canal cruise or visit the Hermitage Museum.

Day 4 Hoorn, Edam & Volendam. After breakfast depart for our exploration of the Zuider Zee. We will drive to Edam, a tranquil little town with charming historic houses. We continue on to the attractive town of Volendam to see its colourful wooden houses and old fishing boats in the harbour. Enjoy some free time here before returning to your ship in Hoorn for lunch and an afternoon at leisure.

Day 5 Arnhem. Arrive this morning into Arnhem and join an excursion to the memorable Airborne Museum 'Hartenstein'; which houses the world's largest collection of militaria from Operation Market Garden. Return to the ship for lunch and this afternoon either choose to explore Arnhem independently or join an optional excursion to the Kröller-Müller Museum.

MS Royal Emerald

We are delighted to have chartered the MS Royal Emerald for a series of river cruises along Europe's main waterways in 2019. This elegant vessel offers a range of luxurious and comfortable suites for a maximum of 171 guests which range in size from 160 to 325 square feet, the majority with outdoor balconies. With its expansive Sun Deck there is ample opportunity to watch the world gently pass by as you relax on board your floating hotel. Spread over four decks, the onboard facilities include the Crystal Dining Room where delicious fare is served in a comfortable setting with open seating throughout. The Panorama Lounge & Bar is a convivial social space with large floor-to-ceiling panoramic windows which create a bright and airy ambience.

Day 6 Dordrecht & Kinderdijk. Depart this morning for a visit to see the marvellous Windmills of Kinderdijk, of which there are 19 in total, dating from 1740. Now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, this ingenious system of windmills and water management has been in operation here for nearly a thousand years. After lunch on board enjoy an afternoon at leisure to explore Dordrecht.

Day 7 Rotterdam, The Hague, Delft. From Rotterdam we depart for a full day tour. Our first stop will be The Hague for a visit to the beautiful Mauritshuis Museum with its marvellous collection of Dutch Golden Age paintings. Afterwards continue on to Delft, birthplace of Vermeer. We will enjoy lunch in a local restaurant on arrival, followed by a walking tour of this pretty town, finishing with a visit to see the Delft Blue Pottery.

Day 8 Keukenhof Gardens & Haarlem. After breakfast drive to nearby Keukenhof Gardens for a morning in this extraordinary horticultural heaven. With 32 hectares of flowers, more than seven million bulbs in bloom and 800 varieties of tulips, this is a truly unique and unforgettable experience. Afterwards return to your ship for a late lunch and time at leisure in Utrecht. Alternatively continue with an optional afternoon excursion to Haarlem.

Day 9 Utrecht. This morning we will visit Utrecht's Botanical Gardens at Fort Hoofddijk, a unique natural treasure consisting of thousands of plant species. Return to the ship for lunch and enjoy an afternoon at leisure in this pretty town. Alternatively join the excursion to the opulent De Haar Castle.

Day 10 Amsterdam to London, Bristol, Manchester or Edinburgh. Disembark after breakfast and return to your chosen UK airport by scheduled flight or to London St Pancras by Eurostar.

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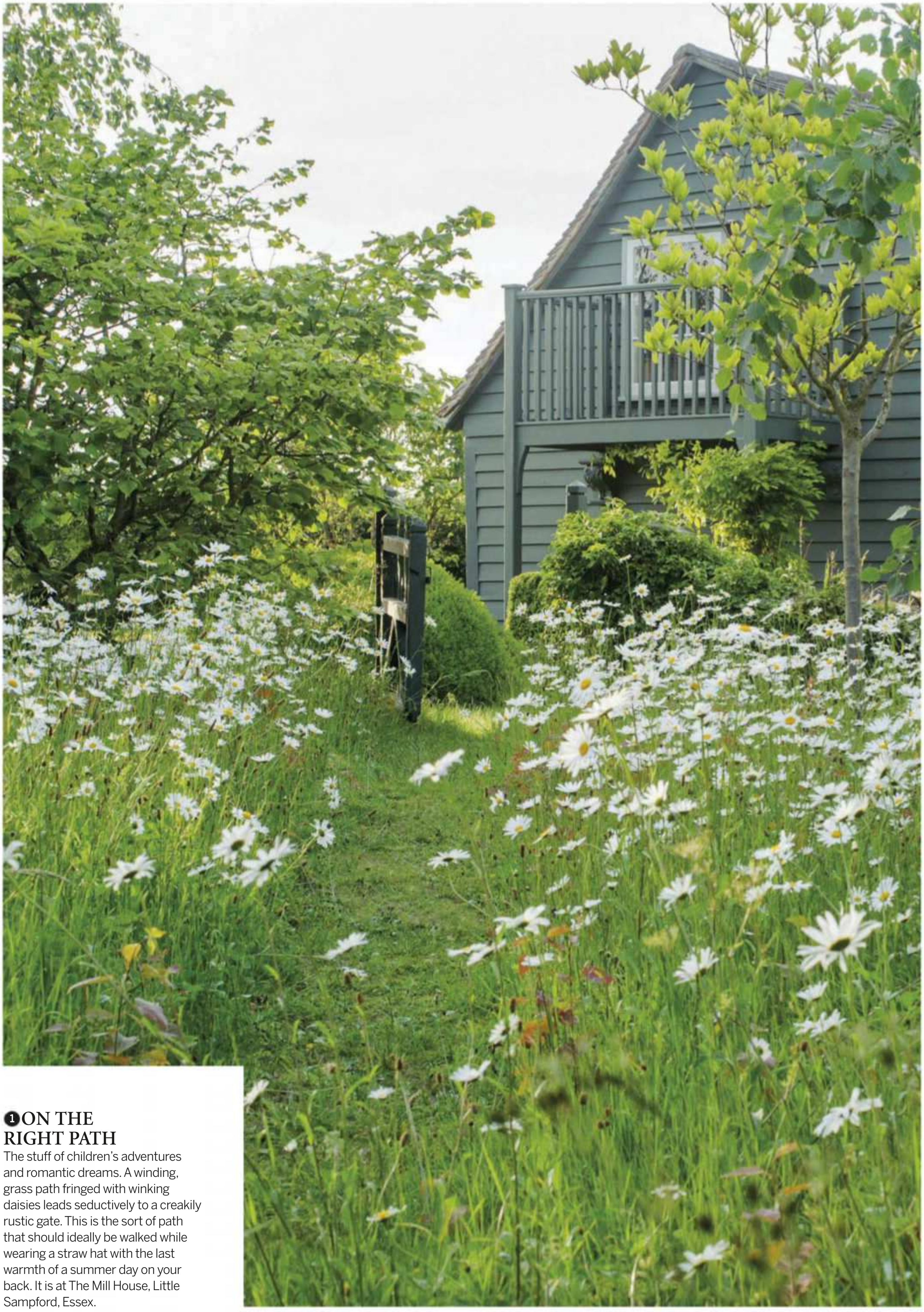

❶ON THE RIGHT PATH

The stuff of children's adventures and romantic dreams. A winding, grass path fringed with winking daisies leads seductively to a creakily rustic gate. This is the sort of path that should ideally be walked while wearing a straw hat with the last warmth of a summer day on your back. It is at The Mill House, Little Sampford, Essex.

HOWARD RICE / GAP PHOTOS

PATHS

From ambling routes mown into grass to ramrod-straight thoroughfares, paths can be either practical or divertingly scenic – or sometimes both

WORDS JAMES ALEXANDER-SINCLAIR

Unless you garden on a very small – very crowded – balcony, you will undoubtedly find yourself in possession of a garden path. We all have them: they lead us to and from doors, washing lines and compost heaps. They give us hard surfaces in wet weather and grassy paths along which we can wander barefoot on hot June afternoons. Without them, we would be crashing through shrubberies and tripping over things.

In essence, garden paths fall into two categories: the practical and the diverting. The practical paths are the ones that take you where you want to go in the shortest time possible. For example, when you return home tired and laden down with children/shopping/ the cares of the world, you really need the shortest distance between you and a gin and tonic: this is not the time for the scenic route. Equally, when it starts raining and you have washing outside, speed is essential, and a diversion via the shrubbery would quickly become annoying. You often see lines through borders at shopping centres or across lawns where the soil is compacted or the grass worn away. These are desire lines – the way that people want to walk to get to their destination rather than using the pretty pathways that have been designed for the purpose. Never fight against desire lines, or you will lose. Maybe you have a deep border with a hedge at the back – you need a path in order to access the hedge for cutting without trampling all over your precious plants. All this may seem a bit dull, but it is really important – without such byways your garden will not work properly.

Conversely, the diverting paths are much more exciting. These are ones along which you wander hand in hand with your beloved, paths that entice you towards a shaded bench or summerhouse. These paths can also be used as a visual 'come hither' – a straight path that leads you directly to a focal point, be it a sculpture, a building, a view or a tree. This is usually quite a formal and straightforward arrangement – what you see is what you get. However, a curved path is much more seductive, especially one that disappears around a corner to arrive at… a shaded bench? A tree? A view? Who knows what? Remember, however, that it needs to lead somewhere good if disappointment is to be avoided.

I have a troublesome path in my own garden: it guides you through emerging perennials, established trees and past a pond. So far, so delightful. But the problems arise when it gives you no choice but to wander into the composting and general storage-of-junk department at the end of the garden. We need a path to this area, but it cannot be part of the main pathway network as not every visitor will find my rubbish that captivating.

James Alexander-Sinclair is a garden designer, writer, broadcaster and founder of into-gardens.com. He has served on the RHS Council for the past five years.

The solution – which I decided on yesterday, so this hot off the press – is to push a new path through the middle of a newly planted border: painful, but not onerous. Gardens are constantly evolving and something decided a year or so ago might not be appropriate today. At least, that is my excuse.

If I may digress for just a moment, while it is important to think of visitors to your garden, it is far more important to think of yourself, as you will walk these paths much more often than your mother or the vicar. They need to make you happy every time you wander off for a quick pootle round the garden.

This brings us to materials. There are so many options: paving, gravel, bark, bricks, grass, timber, chamomile – pretty much anything. I made a wonderful path out of steel washers a few years ago: it clinked when you walked on it, as if you were wearing spurs. The important thing is that you keep it simple and do not mix up your materials too much. If it is a path that will be used all year round, it needs to have a hard surface that drains efficiently – you don't want to get muddy shoes 'twixt front door and car. More than anything, I tend to use gravel (especially in country gardens), as it goes well with most paving stones and is cheap and easy to lay. Make sure you have a good solid edge (steel is simple and unobtrusive) and a decent sub-base.

So there we have it. And while we're on the subject of paths, this is where my path through Design Ideas ends. It has been a delightful couple of years and I thank all of you for coming with me. You may have learned something, you may have been stirred to apoplectic rage, but I hope that whatever happened you had fun. I look forward to seeing you all again soon. ☐

FURTHER INFORMATION

One of the most striking paths I have ever come across is at the charity Perennial's **York Gate Garden** near Leeds. Comprising simple gravel and granite setts, it borders on the iconic. Back Church Lane, Leeds, West Yorkshire LS16 8DW. Tel 0113 267 8240, perennial.org.uk

Sissinghurst Castle Garden has great paths: old York stone flags and mellow Kent bricks. The plants are fabulous too. Biddenden Road, near Cranbrook, Kent TN17 2AB. Tel 01580 710700, nationaltrust.org.uk

The **Geffrye Museum** in London has good brick paths. 136 Kingsland Road, London E2 8EA. Tel 020 7739 9893, geffrye-museum.org.uk

Further reading

Hardscape: Innovative Hard Landscaping Materials for Gardens by Ann-Marie Powell (David & Charles, 2001).

Driveways, Paths and Patios: A Complete Guide to Design Management and Construction by Tony McCormack (Crowood Press. 2005).

Alan Titchmarsh How to Garden: Lawns Paths and Patios by Alan Titchmarsh (BBC Books, 2009)

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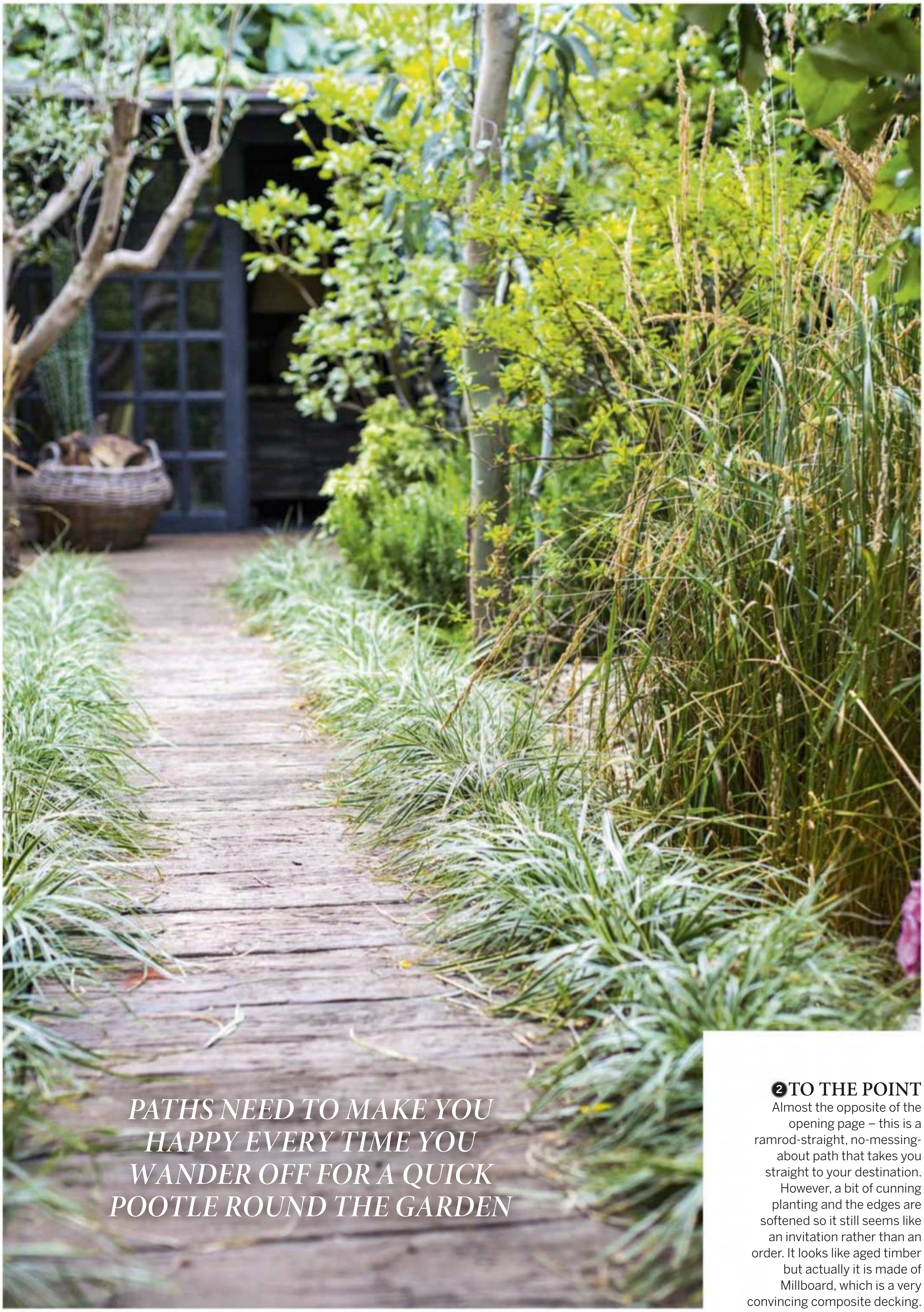


PATHS NEED TO MAKE YOU HAPPY EVERY TIME YOU WANDER OFF FOR A QUICK POOTLE ROUND THE GARDEN

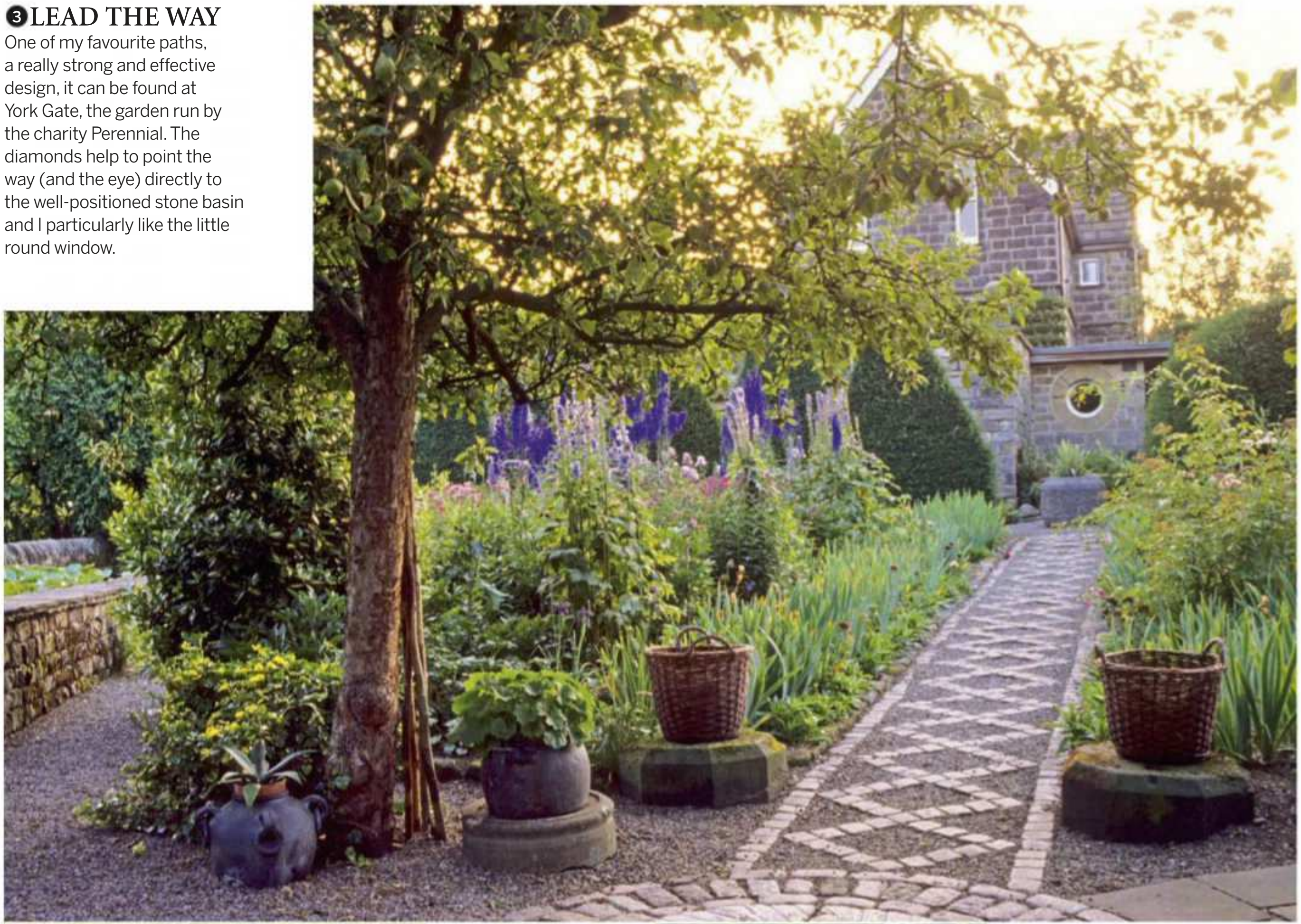
RACHEL WARNE

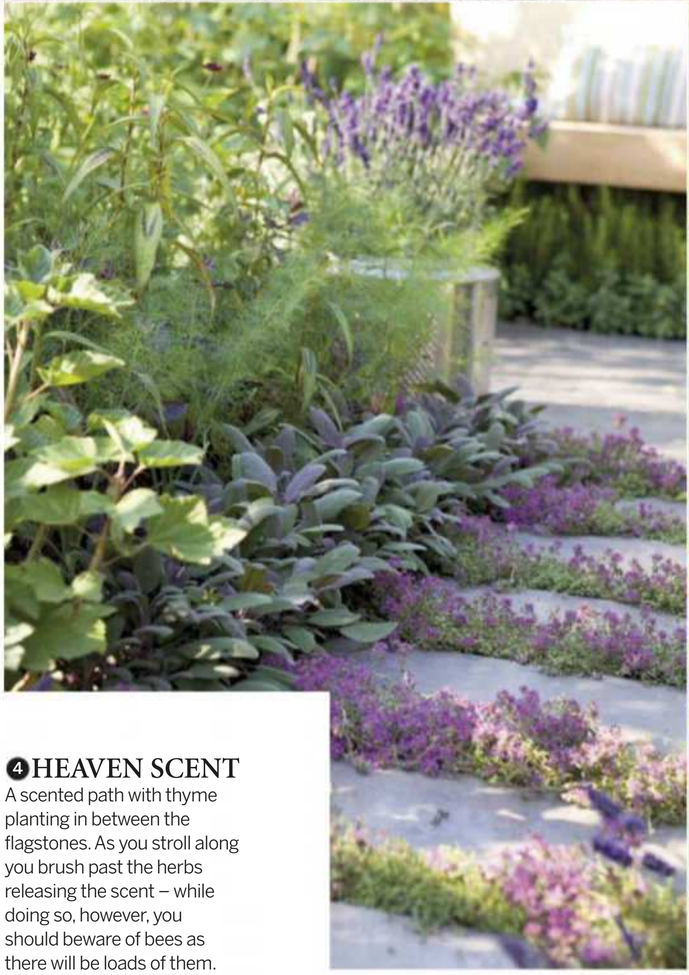
❷ TO THE POINT

Almost the opposite of the opening page – this is a ramrod-straight, no-messing-about path that takes you straight to your destination. However, a bit of cunning planting and the edges are softened so it still seems like an invitation rather than an order. It looks like aged timber but actually it is made of Millboard, which is a very convincing composite decking.

③LEAD THE WAY

One of my favourite paths, a really strong and effective design, it can be found at York Gate, the garden run by the charity Perennial. The diamonds help to point the way (and the eye) directly to the well-positioned stone basin and I particularly like the little round window.



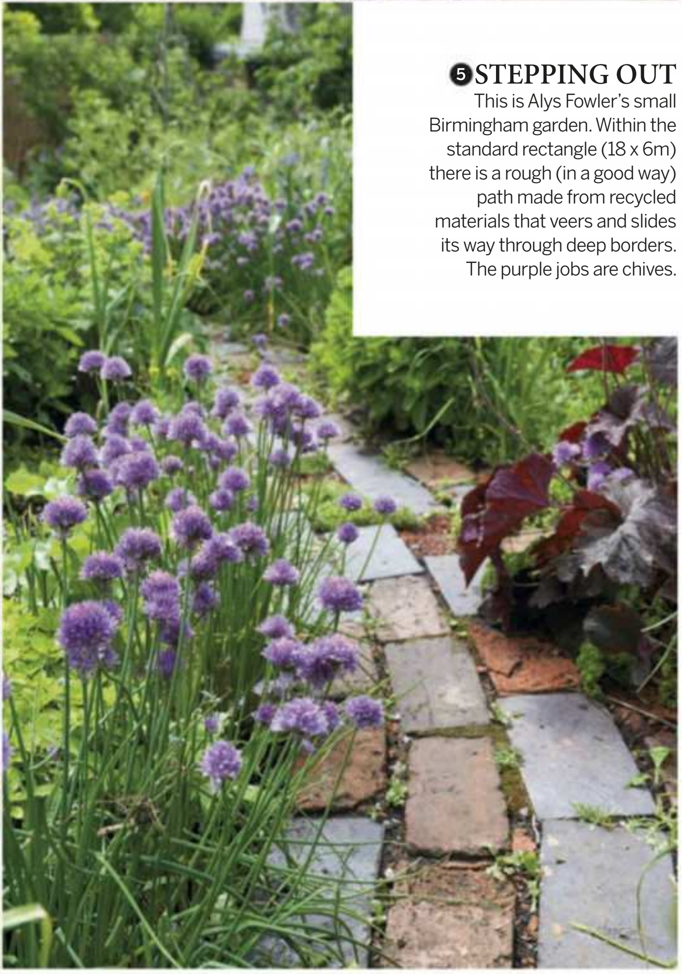


④HEAVEN SCENT

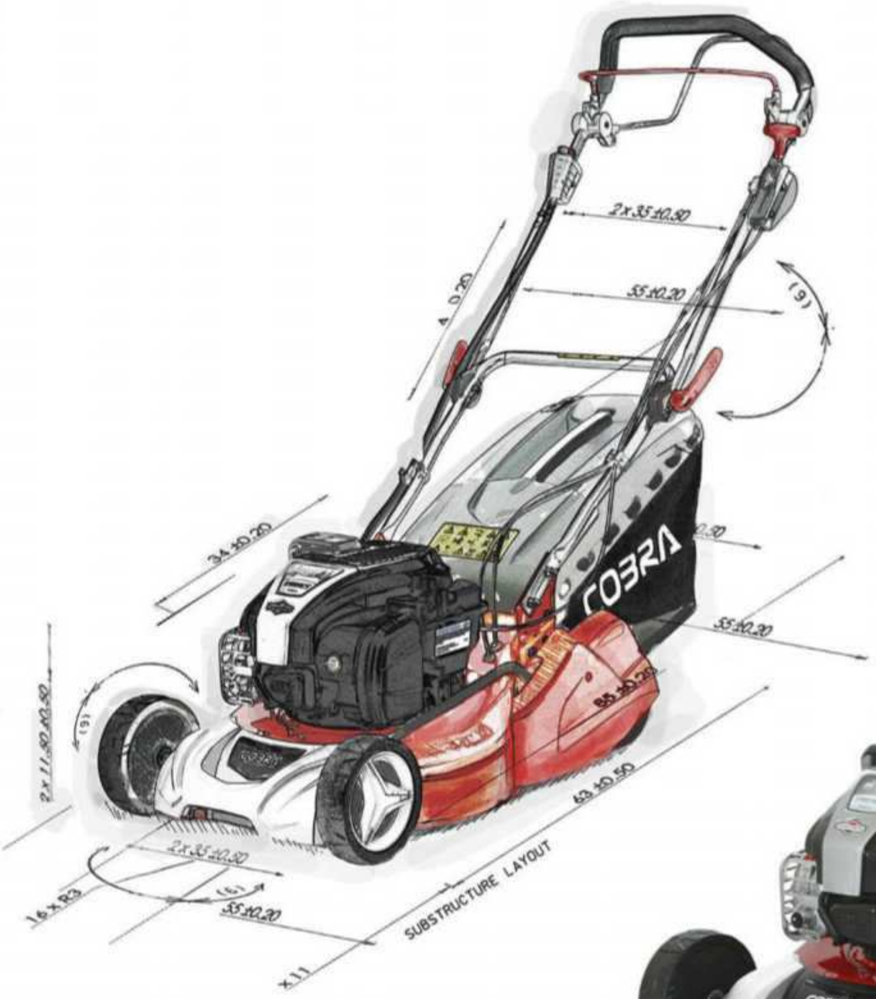
A scented path with thyme planting in between the flagstones. As you stroll along you brush past the herbs releasing the scent – while doing so, however, you should beware of bees as there will be loads of them.

⑤STEPPING OUT

This is Alys Fowler's small Birmingham garden. Within the standard rectangle (18 x 6m) there is a rough (in a good way) path made from recycled materials that veers and slides its way through deep borders. The purple jobs are chives.



3 MARIANNE MAJERUS; 4 SARAH CUTTLE / GAP PHOTOS, DESIGNER: ALEX BELL GARDEN DESIGN; 5 NICOLA STOCKEN / GAP PHOTOS, DESIGN: ALYS FOWLER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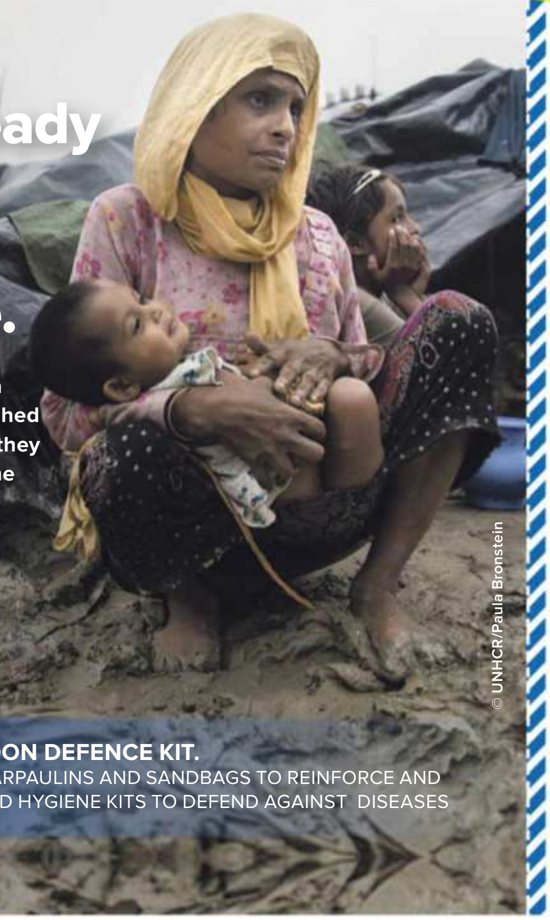

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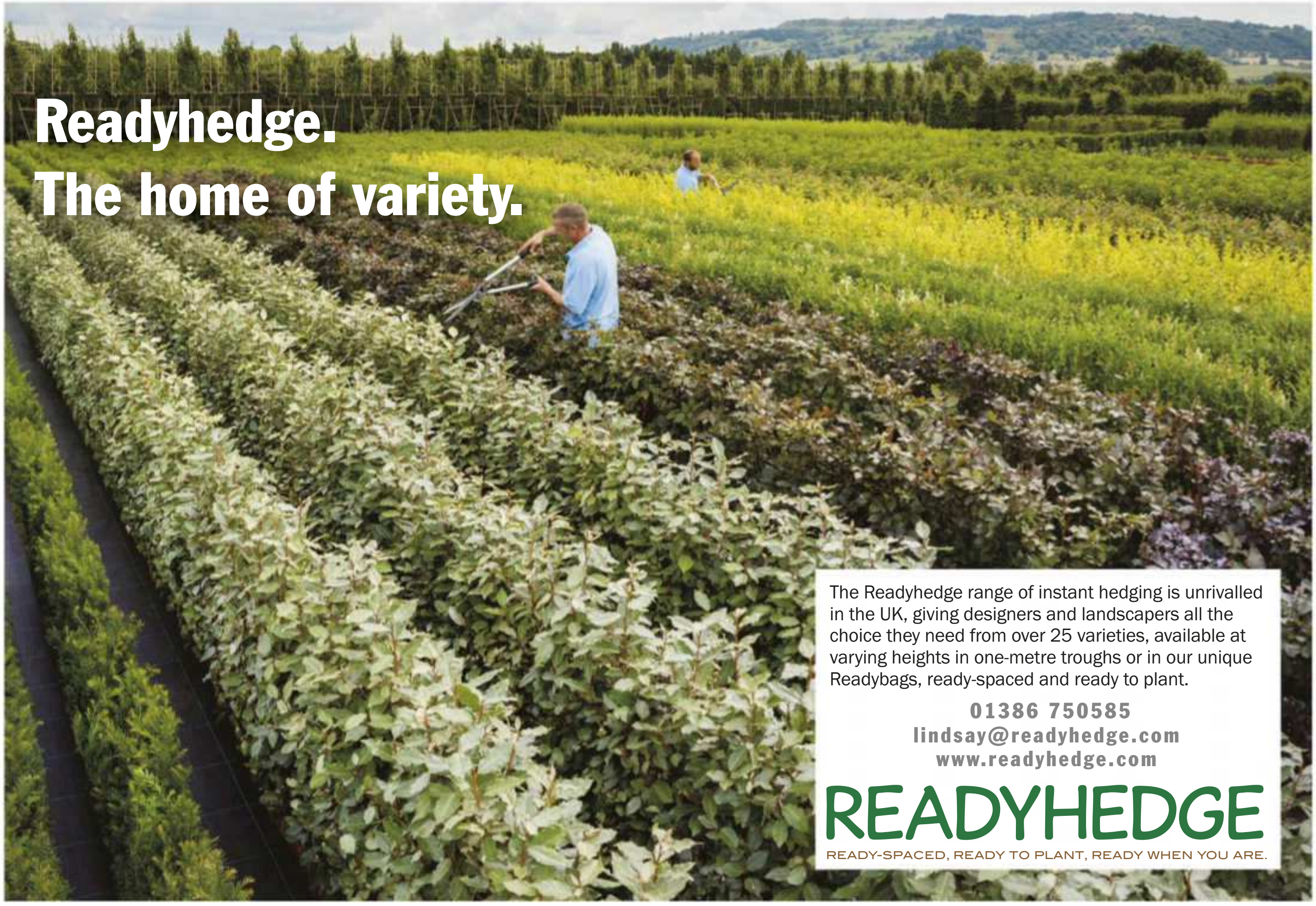

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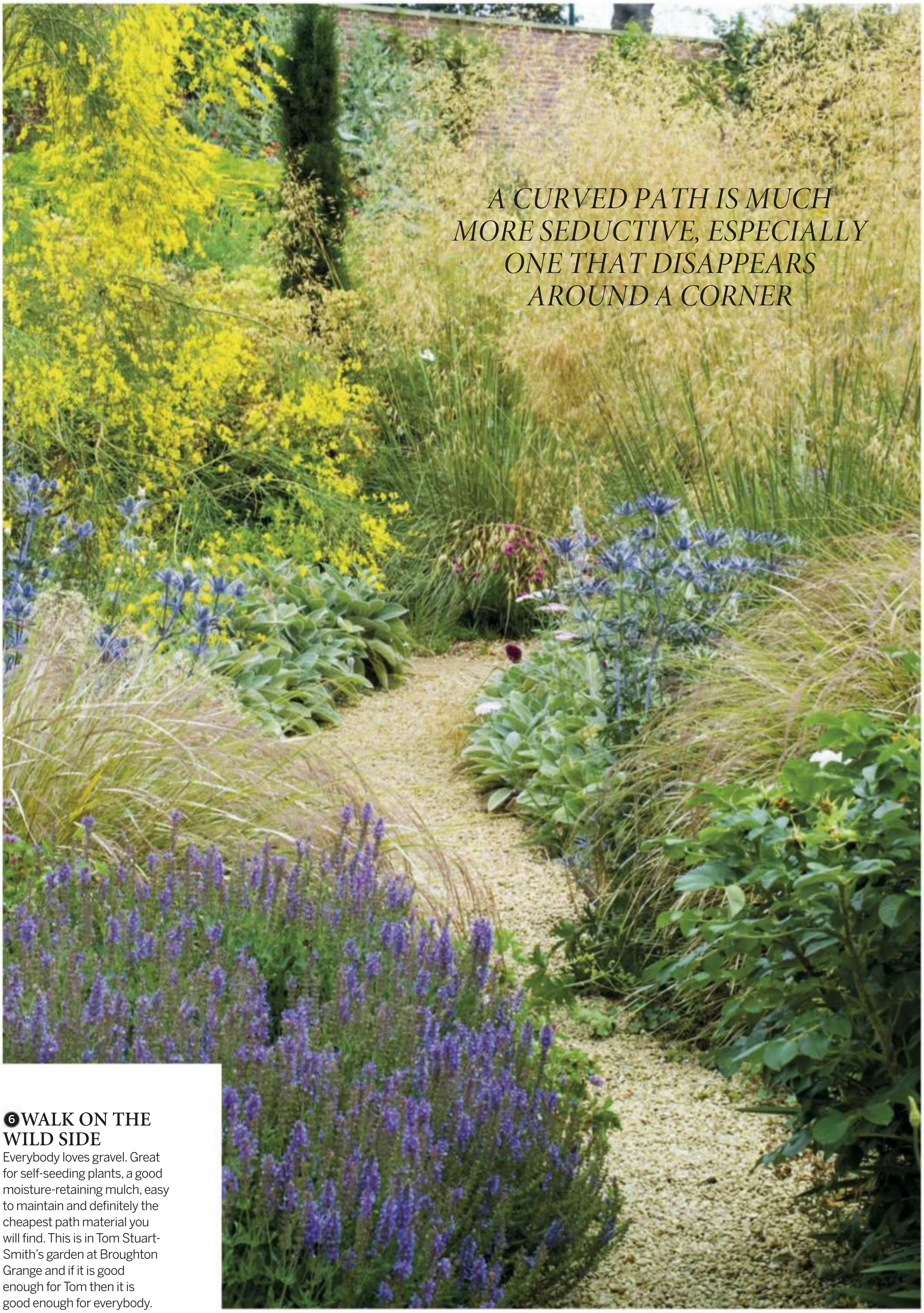
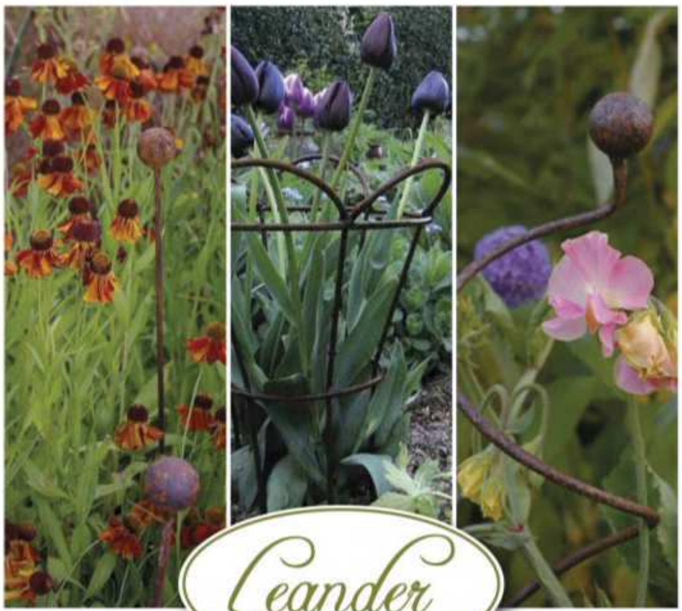


A CURVED PATH IS MUCH MORE SEDUCTIVE, ESPECIALLY ONE THAT DISAPPEARS AROUND A CORNER

❻ WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

Everybody loves gravel. Great for self-seeding plants, a good moisture-retaining mulch, easy to maintain and definitely the cheapest path material you will find. This is in Tom Stuart-Smith's garden at Broughton Grange and if it is good enough for Tom then it is good enough for everybody.

JONATHAN BUCKLEY / GAP PHOTOS, DESIGN: TOM STUART-SMITH



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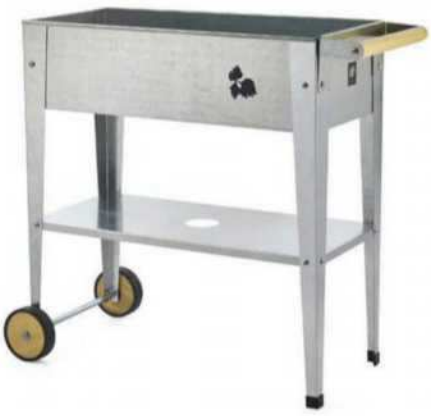

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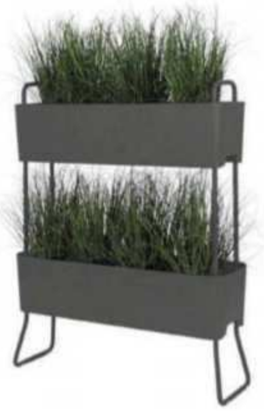

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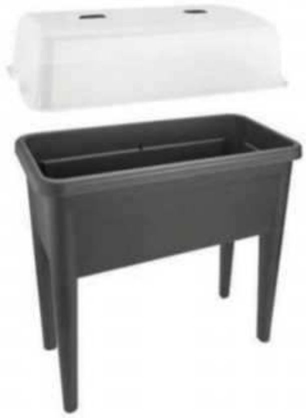

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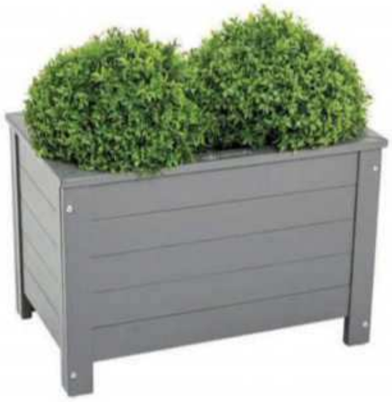

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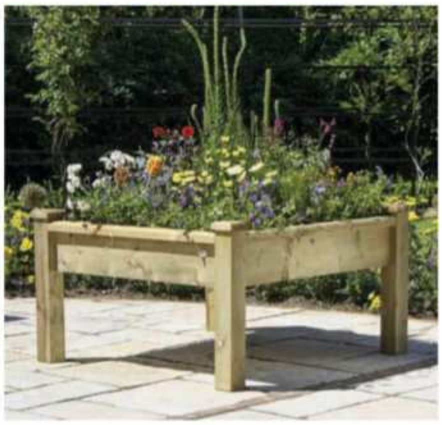

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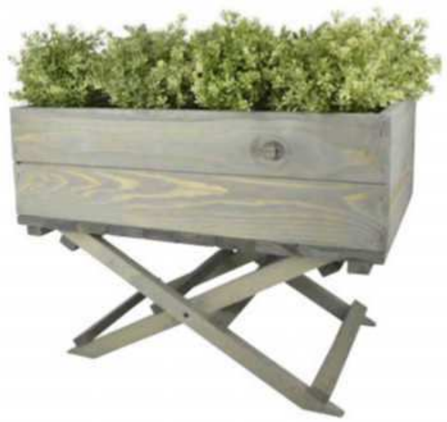

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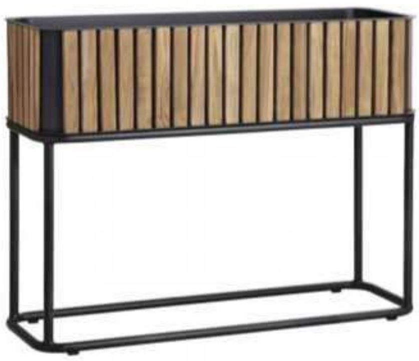

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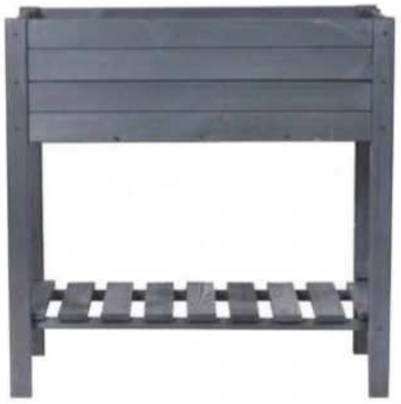

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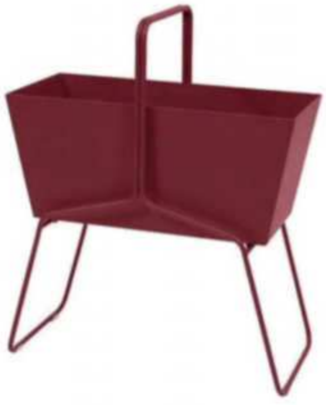

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Basket High Planter in chili,
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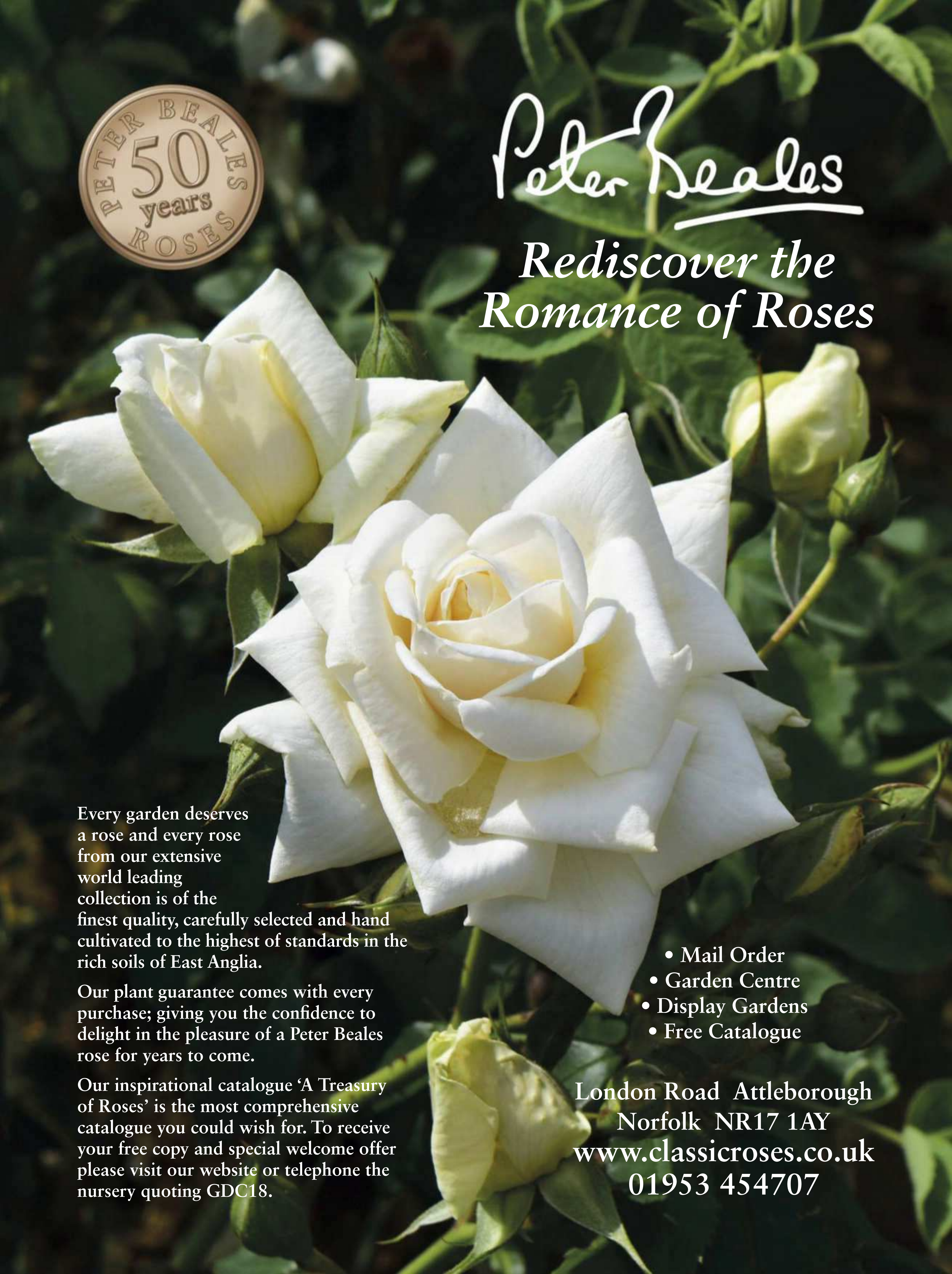
020 8878 1994, barbed.co.uk



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ROBBIE HONEY

Charlotte strikes back

Seven-year-old, beats massive strokes – that's something to sing about!

Being young and healthy is no protection against stroke, as Charlotte and her mother Leila discovered. Charlotte was hit by a major stroke in the middle of the night and was rushed to the hospital. She remained in a coma for two days and suffered more massive strokes. When she came round she couldn't speak, move or even blink. The doctors prepared Leila for the worst.

But Leila didn't give up. While she was singing to her daughter, Charlotte struck back and smiled. Within two weeks she was speaking. Three years on, she is running and playing again. 'It's a miracle to have Charlotte with us' Leila says.

Charlotte's incredible recovery was helped by the huge advances in stroke research we funded, which has completely changed the way stroke is treated. But with only a tenth of the funding given to cancer research, there's so much more to do.

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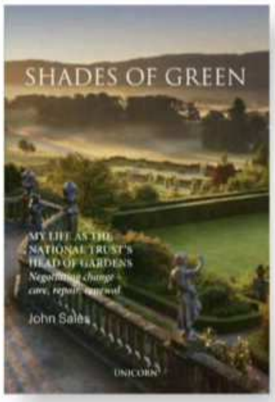
BOOK REVIEWS



SHADES OF GREEN: MY LIFE AS THE NATIONAL TRUST'S HEAD OF GARDENS

by John Sales

Unicorn, £25
ISBN 978-1911604181

Historic garden conservation is about setting up and guiding cycles of growth, development and decay: some for 100 days; others for 100 years.

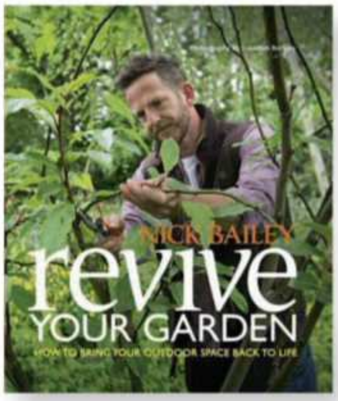
Reviewer Ambra Edwards is an author and garden historian.

You can understand why so many head gardeners think so highly of John Sales, former head of gardens at the National Trust. The admiration is mutual.

It is rarely the genius of a single individual that makes a great garden, he writes, 'but the pursuit of a unique ideal persistently sought and perfected.' He is unstinting in his praise for the talented head gardeners with whom he has worked, just as he pulls no punches in excoriating the forces he sees as inimical to gardening – 'trendy commercial exploitation and obtrusive interpretation'; the 'wilful mismanagement' that reduces a carefully nurtured garden to a shambles in pursuit of a quick buck; and snooty country house ideas of 'good taste'.

When he joined the National Trust in 1971, garden visiting had not yet become a national sport, garden history was in its infancy, and gardens were regarded as no more than an adjunct to the houses they surrounded, subject to the whims of architects 'allergic to plants.' But in this study of 50 projects, we see the birth of the new discipline of historic garden conservation, the first garden restoration at Westbury, his 100-year conservation plan for Stourhead in 1978 – the first of its kind – and the genesis of innumerable garden features that continue to delight garden visitors to this day.

Outrage lies in wait for him at every property – from miffed donor families, 'quasi-religious' environmentalists or indeed his erstwhile boss, Graham Stuart Thomas – while a chronic lack of money and manpower drastically reduce the options available. The book is a testament to his incredible tenacity and clarity of vision, and his wisdom, charm and wry humour shines through its pages.



REVIVE YOUR GARDEN: HOW TO BRING YOUR OUTDOOR SPACE BACK TO LIFE

by Nick Bailey
Photographs by Jonathan Buckley

Kyle Books, £25
ISBN 978-0857834324

A practical guide to all aspects of restoring a garden, offering useful advice, whatever your level of gardening expertise or past experience.

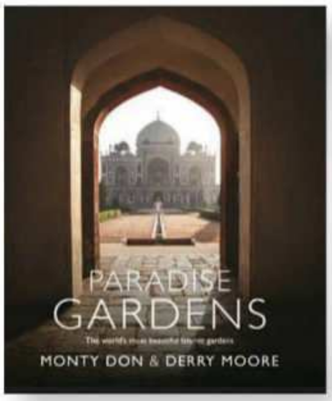
Reviewer Matt Biggs is a Kew-trained gardener and presenter.

Anyone who has inherited an overgrown or derelict garden and faced that perplexing conundrum 'where do I start?' will know that an overload of options can induce panic when what is required is clarity of thought and purpose. This book provides the latter. Logical in progression and easy to follow and understand, it inspires confidence from page one. Starting with basic questions that need to be answered about the site before spade slices into soil, Bailey then turns to the practicalities of identifying weeds that are commonly found in gardens with the aid of a picture key and instructions for the revival of plants, which are helpfully cross referenced to more detailed advice later in the book. Assistance is not just horticultural – the recommendation that clashes with neighbours be avoided by discussing pruning and construction work before it starts and guidelines on tree preservation orders and other legalities, are essentials for a trouble-free project.

The mass of detailed practical information from pruning and planting to replacing wobbly fencing, reviving paths and beyond is delivered in easily digestible portions, although the images are not always detailed enough to be instructional. Particularly helpful are basic elements of design and suggestions for a multitude of plants for every conceivable situation, from damp shade to sun-baked patios, while basic re-designs are laid over images of lifeless lawns. These inspire and instil belief that success is achievable.

It's an ideal book for anyone faced with the prospect of restoring a garden. It leaves the reader with a sense of optimism that, no matter how dire the situation appears to be, with the right information you can create a glorious garden.

BOOK REVIEWS



PARADISE GARDENS

by Monty Don and
Derry Moore

Two Roads, £35
ISBN 978-1473666481

An introduction to the history, philosophy and immersive delights of the Islamic garden tradition from around the world.

Reviewer Jodie Jones is a garden writer.

Another television series, another book from the indefatigable Monty Don. This time the nation's favourite gardener has taken a tour of some of the most important Islamic gardens around the world, from Iran to India, Morocco, Spain, Turkey and then back home to Blighty.

He starts, at the beginning, with Pasargadae, on the great Plain of Murghab in modern-day Iran. Two and a half thousand years ago this was the site of the palace of Cyrus the Great, but now little remains except a monumental stone pillar and a stone-lined channel a kilometre in length, which is in the process of being restored.

The book has been structured to include several pages of photographs of each featured garden, while Don is permitted just a single page of text in which to place it in context. He is a fluent wordsmith, but by the time he has described his five-hour, pre-dawn drive across the desert and given us a few historical data points, there is little space left to conjure the atmosphere of this extraordinary place.
This problem is exacerbated by poor print reproduction on many of the illustrated pages which do no justice to Derry Moore's artfully considered photographs.

Nevertheless, there are evocative vignettes to be gleaned from this wide-ranging study – brightly painted pots lining a bamboo-screened walkway in Le Jardin Majorelle in Marrakech; soft-pink roses within the Carpet Garden at Highgrove; elegant sari-clad women collecting flowers from chandi trees to make into garlands at the Amber Palace outside Jaipur. Take this book as an introduction to a vast subject, and an inducement to begin your own pilgrimage to the paradise gardens of the world.

Green Escapes
PHAIDON

GREEN ESCAPES: THE GUIDE TO SECRET URBAN GARDENS

by Toby Musgrave

Phaidon Press, £16.95
ISBN 978-0714876122

If you like to discover hidden green spaces, keep this book close at hand when planning your next city break.

Reviewer Alys Hurn is staff writer for Gardens Illustrated.

Any green space, whatever its size is a welcome sight but in a city, community gardens, public parks and rooftop gardens offer urbanites a lifeline; shelter from the harsh lines of the surrounding concrete-scape.

These verdant places are the focus of Toby Musgrave's new book. Starting with Oceania, Musgrave works his way across six continents noting off-the-beaten-track, secluded gardens, 280 in total, in 164 cities around the world. Each page is a new garden to seek out and explore and the types of garden included range from botanic and historic gardens to courtyard gardens and pocket parks.

In his introduction, he makes reference to the famous parks of some of the world's largest cities and notes the important role they play but explains that this is a guide focused on the unfamiliar and the intimate, places often unknown even to many of the local residents.

Look up New York and you won't find Central Park, instead you're guided towards Elevated Acre, a rooftop garden on the east side of the financial district where you can take in a panorama over the harbour and East River to Brooklyn while surrounded by textural planting. In Paris it's le Jardin Saint-Gilles-du-Grand-Veneur, a pocket park hidden behind the 17th-century Hôtel du Grand Veneur he recommends visiting – in June to take in the scent of the rose garden.

Limited by space, the description of all the gardens is relatively short, but enough to draw you in and I know I'll be packing the book when I head off on any city breaks because, as Musgrave explains, these hidden spaces are 'a pleasure to be in and from where one emerges revitalised, uplifted, inspired and ready to face the city once more'.

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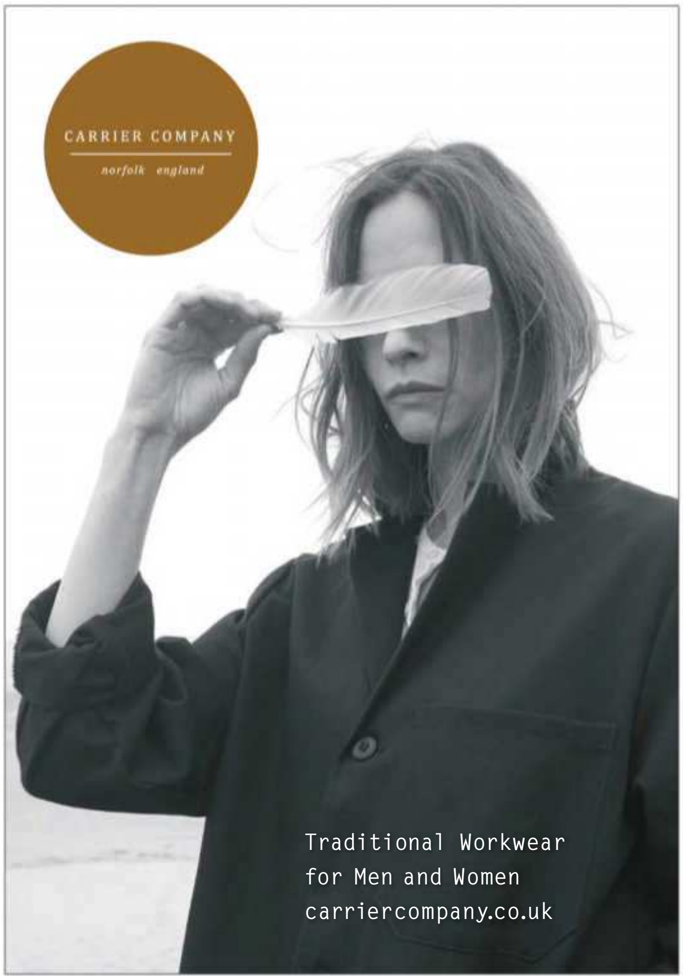

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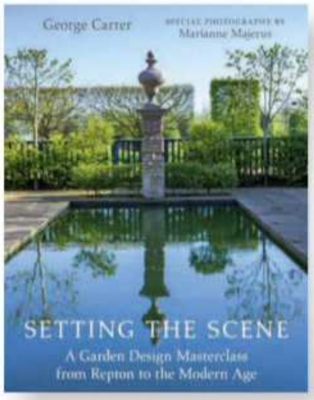


SETTING THE SCENE: A GARDEN DESIGN MASTERCLASS FROM REPTON TO THE MODERN AGE
by George Carter
Photographs by
Marianne Majerus

Pimpernel Press Ltd, £50
ISBN 978-1910258590

Idiosyncratic style manual from one of the UK's leading formalist designers inspired by the great Humphry Repton.

Reviewer Tim Richardson is a garden critic and regular columnist.

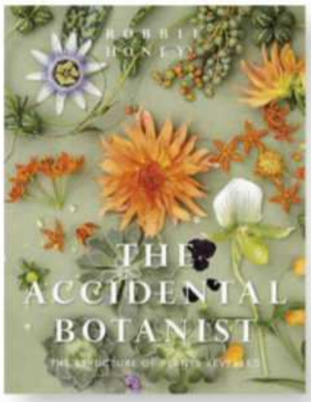
This is the ideal book for anyone who might feel a little wearied by the seemingly endless parade of fashionable New Perennials gardens, filled as they are with a familiar palette of veronicastrum and other late-summer thrusters.

As a rare formalist sitting in the middle of this sea of naturalistic planting, George Carter has long been a valuable figure on the British garden scene. This crisply realised book is presented as both an insight into his method and an ideas manual for those who might sympathise with Repton's dictum that, 'The colour of gold… makes everything pleasing.'

As a self-help garden-design manual the book falls somewhat short, since the scattergun approach means that the author never dwells for long on any particular topic ('light and shade' probably deserves more than a few paragraphs). In addition, a rather monomaniacal adherence to the example and writings of Humphry Repton (alone) means the text – and reader – soon feel shackled to the Regency designer.

This shortcoming can be dismissed as an allowable eccentricity, however, given the sheer originality, verve, wit and invention bursting from the images on these pages. The author modestly tells us about Repton – but it is Carter from whom we learn. He gives the amateur designer the confidence to experiment with ornament and be bold with evergreen shapes.

Two garden projects are given much deeper treatment: Oxnead Hall, Norfolk, and Penshurst Place, Kent. At the latter Carter has made long, mixed borders that are strictly colour themed in a manner that might be described as deeply unfashionable at the moment, and are all the more innovative for that.



THE ACCIDENTAL BOTANIST
by Robbie Honey

Clearview Books, £20
ISBN 978-1908337443

A visual deconstruction of the favourite flowers of a florist, interwoven with a bit of botany and a sprinkling of autobiography.

Reviewer John Hoyland is a plantsman and writer.

Robbie Honey is hard to categorise. A background in horticulture, in garden and interior design, floristry and perfume-creation have all been driven and inspired by his love of plants. Every gardener knows that looking closely at flowers, carefully analysing their structure, brings unexpected insights, and it is these that Honey shares in his book.

He has taken some of his favourite flowers from around the world, disassembled their constituent parts and photographed them. The result is a collection of beautiful, often intriguing, images. He points out that his deconstructions are neither academic nor complete representations of each flower but rather what he considers the subject's most beautiful attributes.

His technique is to take the flower apart and lay out its parts in an aesthetically pleasing way. The style of the layouts of the specimens are painterly. While the lines are strong, it is colour and texture that are favoured, with the result that some plates look as if they have been painted. In fact, surprisingly, the images were taken on an iPhone using natural light.

The book is also part autobiography and, as well as an introduction that recounts the story of a journey that began in rural Zimbabwe, he weaves anecdotes about his life throughout the book. Alongside most plant plates there is a brief story about where he found the plant or his relationship with it. Honey also gives a brief description of each plant, its distribution, uses and history.

This book is not, as the blurb claims, botany 'transformed for a modern audience'. It is a gentle meander, looking at captivating flowers in the company of someone with a passion for flowers and plants, an eye for beauty and who has interesting stories to tell along the way.

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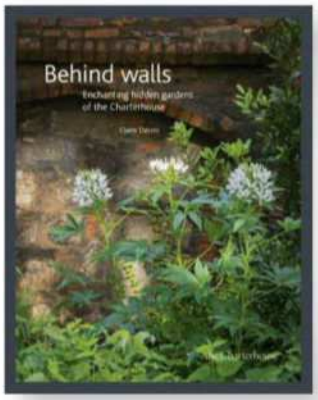


BEHIND WALLS: ENCHANTING HIDDEN GARDENS OF THE CHARTERHOUSE
by Claire Davies

The Charterhouse, £24
ISBN 978-0954812270

A chance to look behind the walls of the London Charterhouse and take a leisurely stroll around its normally hidden gardens.

Reviewer Juliet Giles is a freelance writer.

One of my first jobs was in Cloth Fair on the northern edge of the City. Occasionally, my lunchtime strolls would take me past an old, wooden door set into a tall, ancient-looking wall and I would speculate about what secret, urban oasis might lie behind. Now, finally, I know.

The wall belongs to the Charterhouse, originally built as a monastery in 1371. Later it became a private house and in 1611 was acquired by the wealthy philanthropist Thomas Sutton who founded a school and almshouse on the site. The school has long since relocated to Godalming in Surrey, but the almshouse remains and is home to 43 Brothers as the men (and now one woman) who live here are known.

Their home really is the verdant sanctum I once imagined, thanks in no small part to head gardener Claire Davies. When she arrived in 2009 the Charterhouse's series of enclosed, courtyard gardens felt a little down at heel, but over the past nine years she has transformed them into a beautiful and unified space for the Brothers to enjoy.

She is also a freelance photographer and it is the many thousands of images she's taken over the years (whittled down to around 300 by graphic designer and Brother Tim Epps) that form the basis for this book – all proceeds from which will go towards upkeep of the Charterhouse.

Text is kept to a minimum, allowing the photographs to guide you through each of the colourful gardens, stopping only to point out some of the highlights, from stunning irises and summer roses to the architectural *Echium pininana* and wisteria-covered walls.

The gardens open to the public only five times a year, so this virtual tour is a real boon for garden lovers and curious office workers alike.

Other books

Five more must-read books this month, exploring everything from stunning nature-inspired interior design to Sussex trugs.

Quiet Pattern

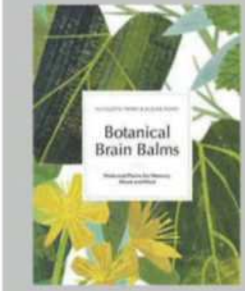
QUIET PATTERN
by Abigail Edwards
Clearview Books, £20
ISBN 978-1908337450
A beautiful book that explores the history of interior designs that are closely linked with nature, and the work of contemporary artists.

Charlie Hart
Skymeadow

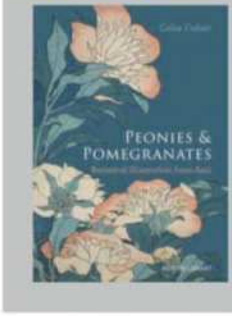
SKYMEADOW: NOTES FROM AN ENGLISH GARDENER
by Charlie Hart
Constable, £16.99
ISBN 978-1472128775
A heart-warming memoir celebrating the healing powers of gardening and the beauty of nature.

The Sussex Trug

THE SUSSEX TRUG: FORM, FUNCTION AND CRAFT
by Sarah Page
The Truggery, in association with Otherwise, £20
ISBN 978-1999922207
Learn about the history of the much-loved Sussex trug and the lives of its makers.



BOTANICAL BRAIN BALMS: MEDICINAL PLANTS FOR MEMORY, MOOD AND MIND
by Nicolette and Elaine Perry
Filbert Press, £14.99
ISBN 978-0993389283
A guide to the plants that may help you remember where you left your keys.



PEONIES & POMEGRANATES: BOTANIC ILLUSTRATION FROM ASIA
by Celia Fisher
British Library, £14.99
ISBN 978-0712309745
A look at the Eastern origins of some of our most popular garden plants.

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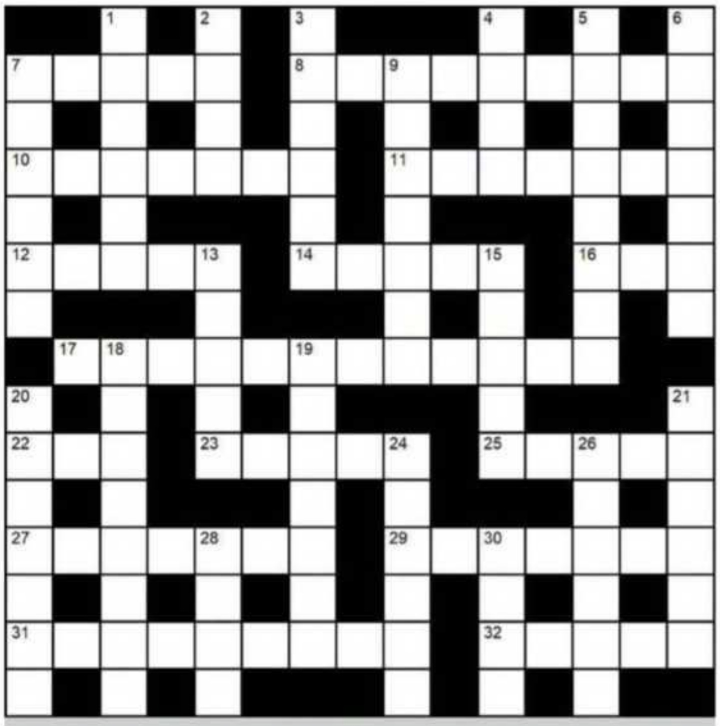

ACROSS

7 Mrs Perón's small, compact pampas grass (5)
8 Coneflower member of *Aster* family – ie a chance arrangement (9)
10 Love affair with this named early flowering yellow crocus? (7)
11 Partly opened eglantine, say (7)
12 Who's tastefully holding the plantain lily genus? (5)
14/21 down Common name for this early spring-flowering bulb – from the Netherlands, occurs all over the place (5,6)
16 Possess some yellow narcissi (3)
17 Genus of Californian poppy – Liz chose cash alternatively (12)
22/26 down Ruddy arachnid, a mite annoying in the greenhouse! (3,6)
23 Small palm: Edinburgh's Botanic Garden has 200-year-old one… a balsa sort (5)
25 Series of bright-coloured cyclamen – produces intense light beam! (5)
27 Genus of lemon balm herb – as is elm, oddly (7)
29 Caption about a cactus dahlia and defunct US car brand (7)
31 Always envious for a plant that doesn't shed its leaves (9)
32 Ashes, say, and what they might become if burnt down? (5)

DOWN

1 Eden Project's domed plant enclosures (6)
2 A *Viburnum* x *bodnantense* at daybreak? (4)
3 Withdraw, we hear, to repair lawn's bare patches (6)
4 Tips I've removed from endives (4)
5 Genus of 'pincushion flower' – so a basic sort (8)
6 Evergreen shrub of barberry family – in Britain and in Asia (7)
7 Hearty sort of taste attributed to eg beetroot (6)
9 Nelson's first *Aruncus* whose leaves turn red in autumn (7)
13 Hairy plant-louse, woolly ___ (5)
15 Woman's nut-producing tree of *Corylus* genus (5)
18 Genus of plants resembling miniature hollyhocks – turns Alice sad (8)
19 Term of endearment for vegetable garden plant? (7)
20 Classic cooking apple cultivar (7)
21 See 14 across
24 George Russell bred the modern form of these spiky flowers (6)
26 See 22 across
28 Herb of the *Salvia* genus (4)
30 Mad for certain tree fruits? (4)

SOLUTIONS TO THIS MONTH'S CROSSWORD WILL BE PRINTED NEXT MONTH

SOLUTIONS TO MAY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS 1 Stem **4** Rosa rugosa **9** Capsid **10** Esparto **11** Snap **13** Rasta **14** Ewer **15** Achillea **18** Towers **20** Staked 22 Tidy tips **24** Blom **26** Sepal **28** Rhus **30** Drosera **31** Brooms **33** Enkianthus **34** Test.

DOWN 2 Train **3** Mas **4** Ruderal **5** Seeds **6** Replant **7** Gorse **8** Stonecrop **12/32** Prick out **16** Cotyledon **17** Ant **19** Water **21** Dasheen **23** Delibes **25** Maori **27** Peach **29** Ulmus.

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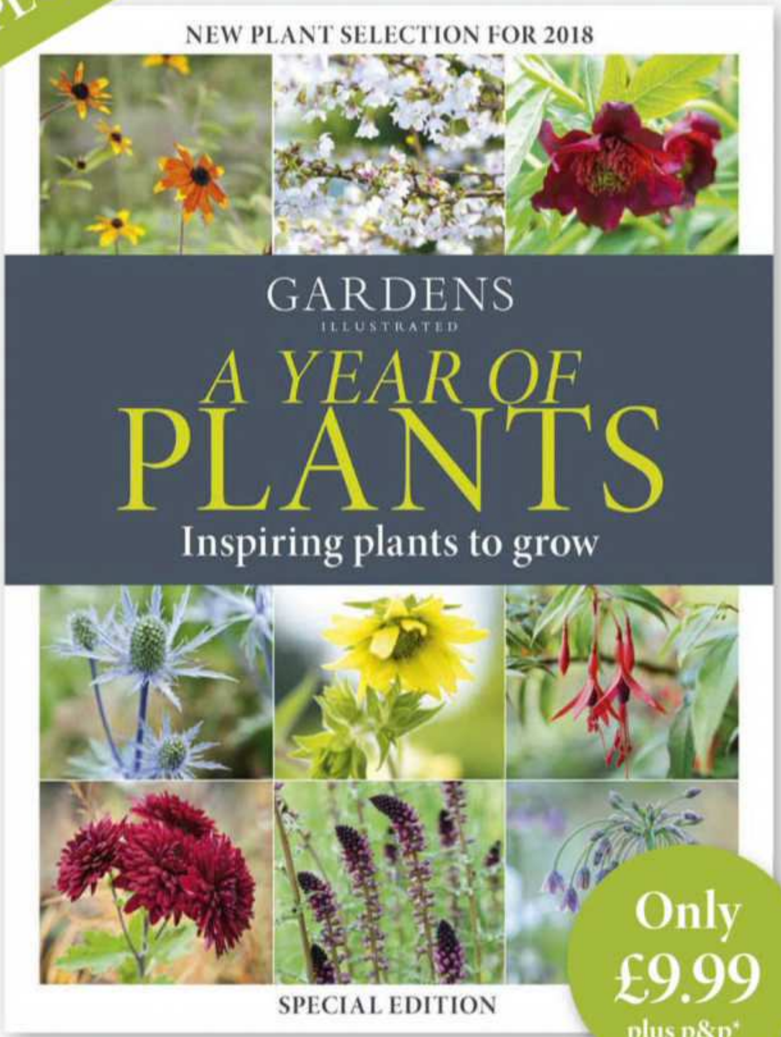

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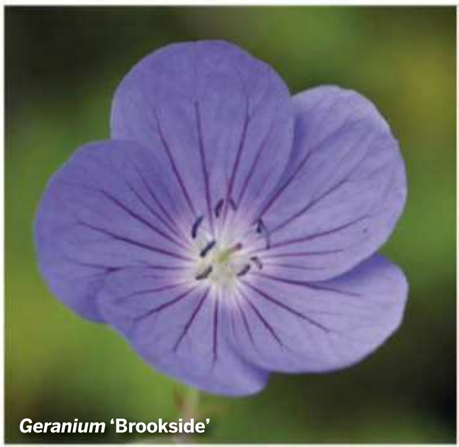
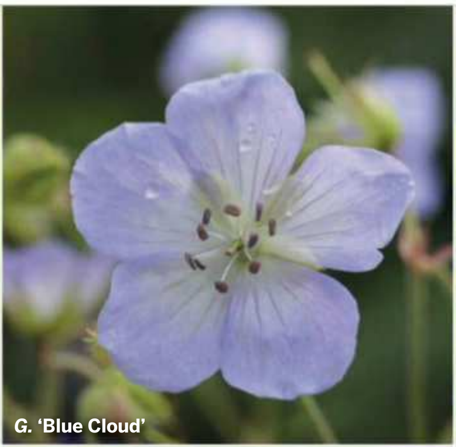
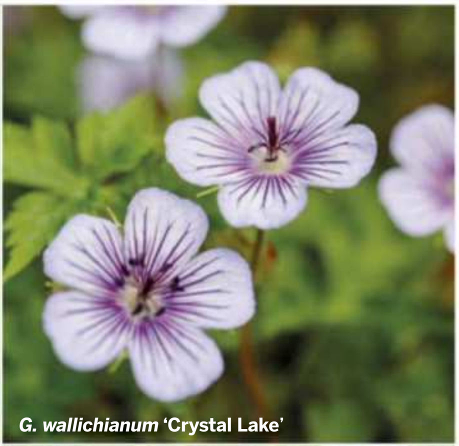
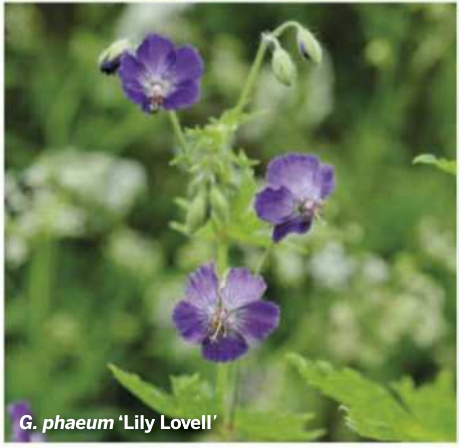
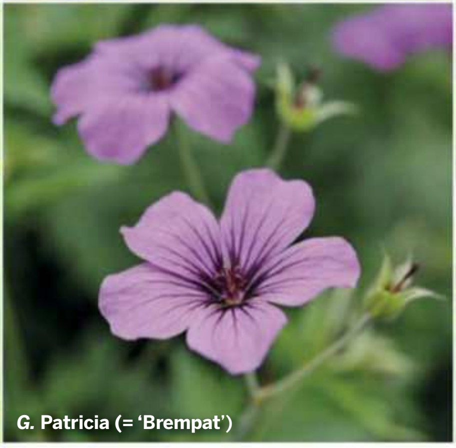
Hardy geranium offer from Woottens of Wenhaston

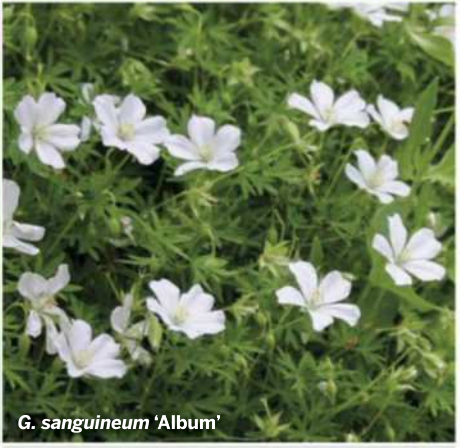

Geranium 'Brookside'


G. 'Blue Cloud'


G. wallichianum 'Crystal Lake'


G. phaeum 'Lily Lovell'


G. Patricia (= 'Brempat')


G. sanguineum 'Album'

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WHAT TO PLANT
10
peonies
baptisia

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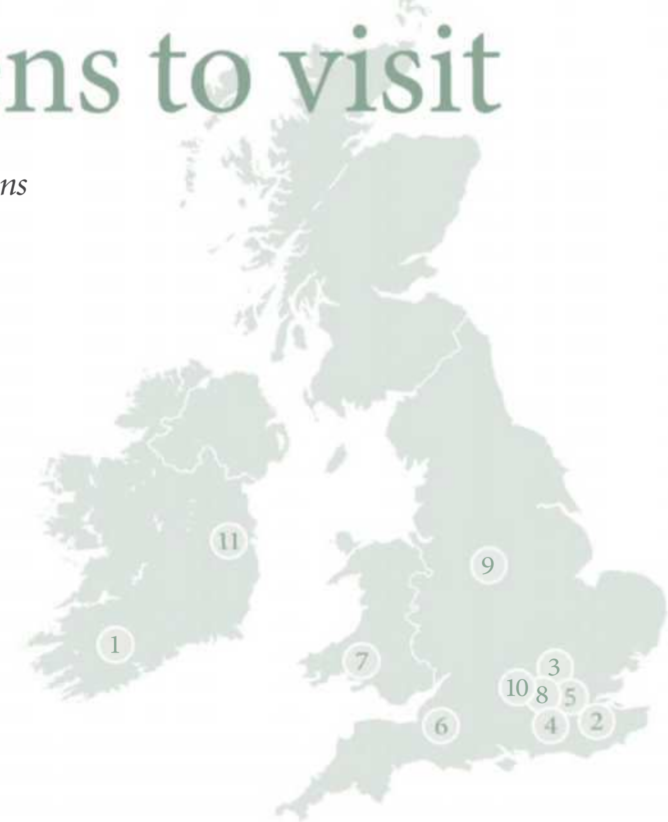

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nationaltrust.org.uk/woolbeding-gardens | 0344 249 1895

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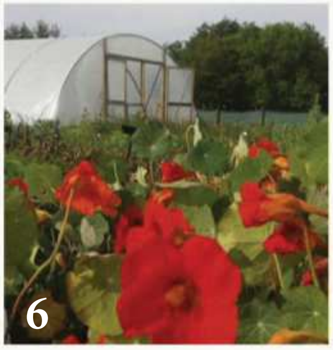
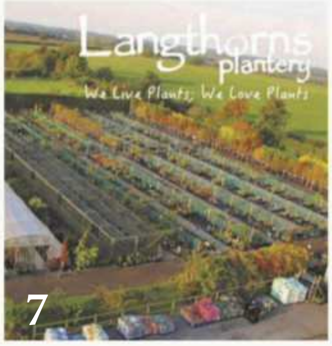
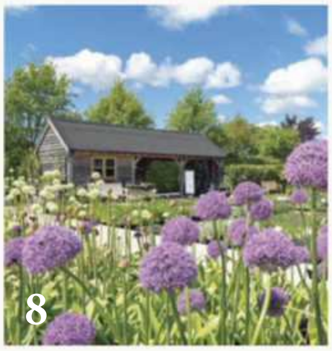
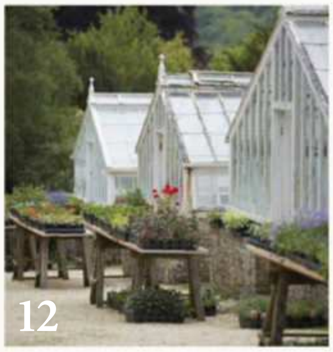
3









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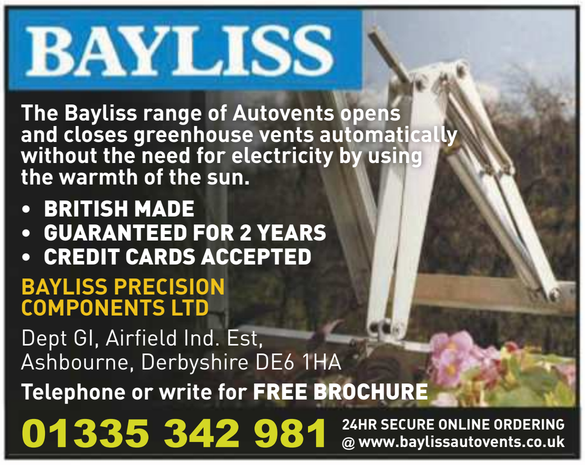

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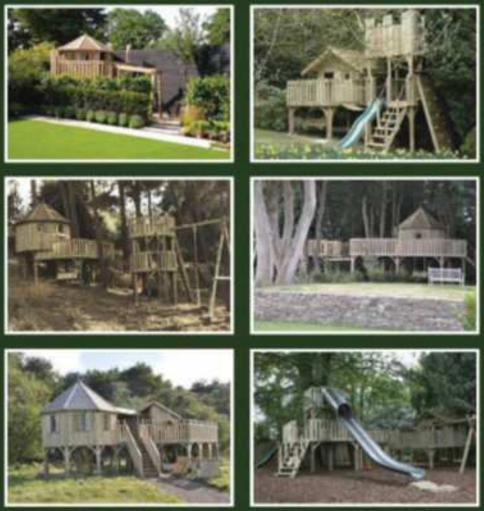

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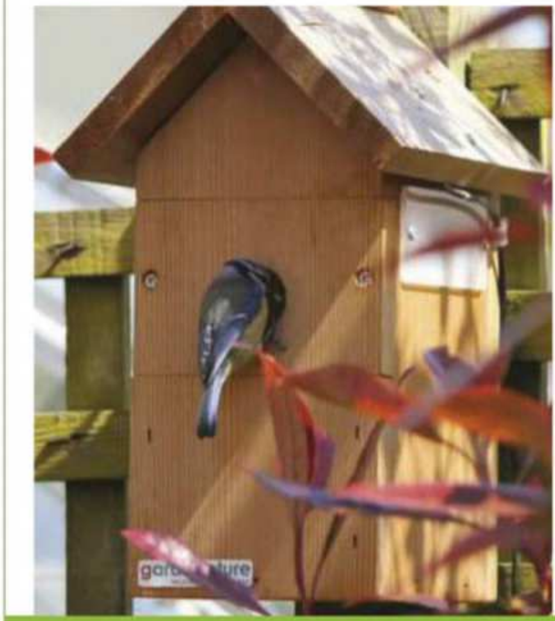

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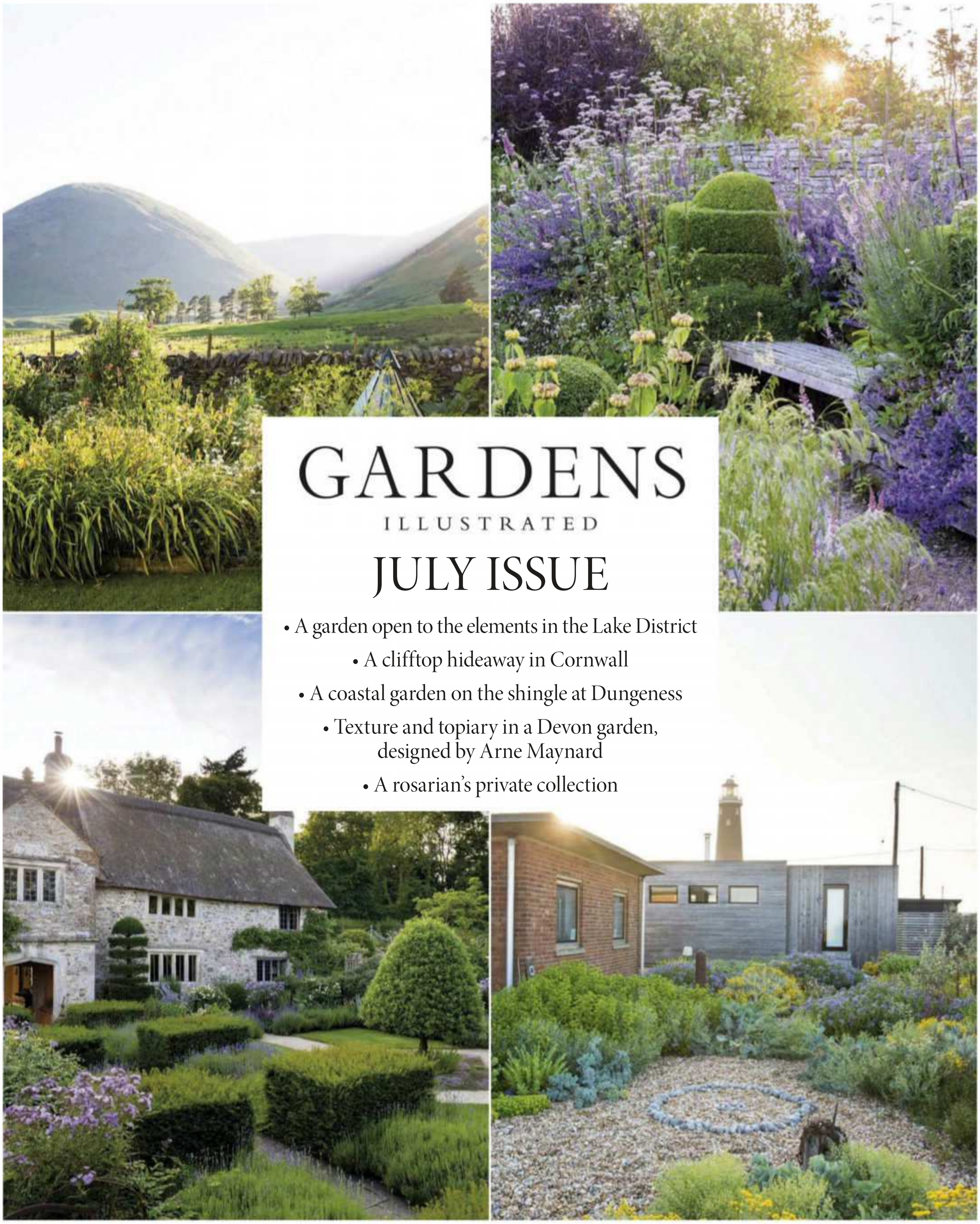

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JULY ISSUE

- A garden open to the elements in the Lake District
- A clifftop hideaway in Cornwall
- A coastal garden on the shingle at Dungeness
- Texture and topiary in a Devon garden, designed by Arne Maynard
- A rosarian's private collection

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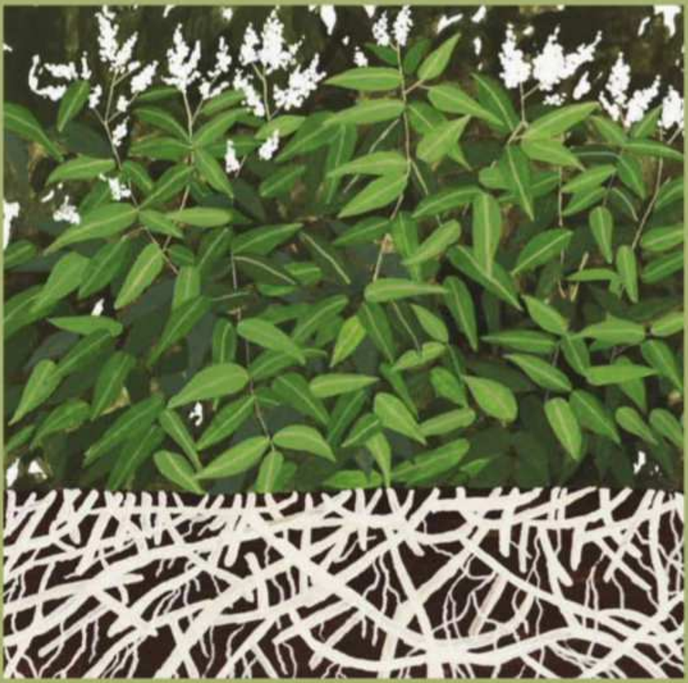
WRITER'S PLOT

ENEMY AT THE GATES

When an unwise purchase threatens to overrun a border, Frank decides it is time to arm himself with a fork and take back control

WORDS **FRANK RONAN** ILLUSTRATION **RACHEL VICTORIA HILLIS**



Sometime back in the 1980s I got a whiff of something nice in Beth Chatto's garden and, eventually, tracked it down to a giant bistort with panicles of creamy white flowers. It went on the mental long list of plants I would one day grow if I got my hands on rolling acres. Cut to fifteen years later and the acquisition of this mildly sloping third of an acre and the excitement of a new garden and wanting to plant everything that had ever caught my eye or nose, no matter how unsuitable, unwise or uncontrollable. *Persicaria wallichii* came to join us.

THE BISTORT MILLED ABOUT, NOT UNLIKE A HORDE AT THE FRONTIER, AND SOON BEGAN TO POUR OVER IT

I was not entirely incautious. It was planted at the back of the long border, with small trees either side to hem it in. When it began to demonstrate territorial ambitions I took advice and made a barrier at the furthest extent I was prepared to allow it. My advisor put me on to 450mm damp-proof membrane, which he said was strong enough to hold a bamboo back. A semicircular trench was dug and the subterranean wall installed, and I walked away looking forward to many years of happy coexistence.

Which, to some extent, we had. The bistort, on reaching the barrier, milled about not unlike a horde at the frontier and soon, inevitably, began to pour over it. Those incursions were easily patrolled by regular slashings with a sharp spade. More tiresomely it began to poke up through the concrete access path at the back of the border, making regular strimming a necessity. Most worryingly it would pop up in random places in the border. Extracting those pieces involved serious delving and disturbance of other plants, and I began to think I had made a horrible mistake.

The worse its behaviour became the less alluring the scent seemed and the coarser the flowers and leaves began to appear. I thought sometimes of having the whole lot out, but the more it grew and the more daunting the task became the more easy it was to convince myself that I had the situation under control. And before I went to America I did manage to keep on top of it, more or less.

You can imagine what three years without discipline did. I could see now why some people call it Himalayan knotweed. That whole border needed an overhaul, but the couch and hogweed and bindweed elsewhere seemed positively benign compared to this intrusive guest. The paralysis of not knowing where to begin the restoration, not helped by the least gardening-friendly spring in living memory, was soon overcome with the realisation that one should always get stuck in at the most horrible part of a job. The thought of starting at one end of the border while the knotweed advanced brazenly to meet me was too much. I attacked it at the source.

I had forgotten the satisfaction of long days kneeling in waterproof trousers, digging deep with a fork and fingering through every handful of soil for stray bits of unwanted root. That was how that whole border was made to begin with. Only this time I had the encouragement of seeing the benefits of my own handiwork as I went. The crumbling gritty texture; the lost treasures rediscovered and carefully rescued, potted up and put to one side for better times to come; the knowledge acquired since of what would like to grow exactly where, allowing sound plans to replace fantasies.

I know that, for years to come, the knotweed beast will recrudesce and regroup. With that in mind the plan is to use that part of the border for dahlias and cannas and summer bedding, so that twice a year it will all be dug up again and every remaining trace of the bistort hunted down and deported. It is long since I had such scope for dahlias, not to mention zinnias and cleomes and sunflowers, and I can't think of a nicer way to clean the ground. It is the ultimate win-win situation. ◻

Frank Ronan is a novelist who lives and gardens in Worcestershire.

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